MATTHEW ARNOLD

Lucy M. Hallett

THE CAMEO POETS

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The Strayed Reveller.

Let the wild thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul!

MATTHEW ARNOLD

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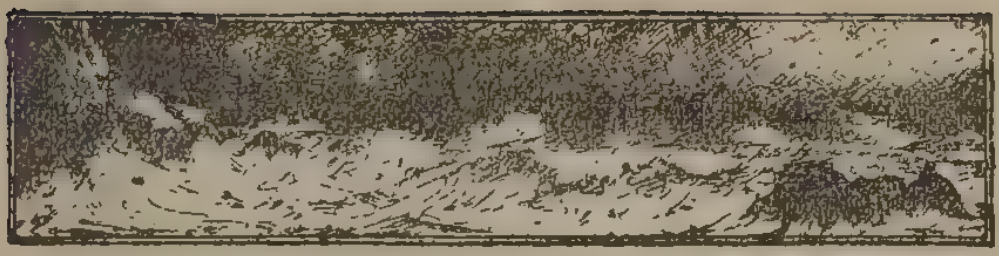


THE CHURCH OF BROU

I

The Castle

Down the Savoy valleys sounding,
Echoing round this castle old,
'Mid the distant mountain chalets
Hark! what bell for church is toll'd?

In the bright October morning
Savoy's Duke had left his bride.
From the Castle, past the drawbridge,
Flow'd the hunters' merry tide.

Steeds are neighing, gallants glittering.
Gay, her smiling lord to greet,
From her mullion'd chamber casement
Smiles the Duchess Marguerite.

From Vienna by the Danube
Here she came, a bride, in spring.
Now the autumn crisps the forest;
Hunters gather, bugles ring.

THE CHURCH OF BROU

Hounds are pulling, prickers swearing,
  Horses fret, and boar-spears glance:
Off!—They sweep the marshy forests,
  Westward, on the side of France.

Hark! the game's on foot; they scatter:—
  Down the forest ridings lone,
Furious, single horsemen gallop.
  Hark! a shout—a crash—a groan!

Pale and breathless, came the hunters.
  On the turf dead lies the boar.
God! the Duke lies stretch'd beside him—
  Senseless, weltering in his gore.

In the dull October evening,
  Down the leaf-strewn forest road,
To the Castle, past the drawbridge,
  Came the hunters with their load.

In the hall, with sconces blazing,
  Ladies waiting round her seat,
Cloth'd in smiles, beneath the dais
  Sate the Duchess Marguerite.

Hark! below the gates unbarring!
  Tramp of men and quick commands!
"—'Tis my lord come back from hunting."—
  And the Duchess claps her hands.

Slow and tired, came the hunters;
  Stopp'd in darkness in the court.
"—Ho, this way, ye laggard hunters!
  To the hall! What sport, what sport?"—

Slow they enter'd with their Master;
  In the hall they laid him down.
On his coat were leaves and blood-stains;
  On his brow an angry frown.

Dead her princely youthful husband
  Lay before his youthful wife;
Bloody 'neath the flaring sconces:
  And the sight froze all her life.

In Vienna by the Danube
  Kings hold revel, gallants meet.
Gay of old amid the gayest
  Was the Duchess Marguerite.

In Vienna by the Danube
  Feast and dance her youth beguil'd.
Till that hour she never sorrow'd;
  But from then she never smil'd.

'Mid the Savoy mountain valleys
  Far from town or haunt of man,
Stands a lonely Church, unfinish'd,
  Which the Duchess Maud began:

THE CHURCH OF BROU

Old, that Duchess stern began it;
In gray age, with palsied hands.
But she died while it was building,
And the Church unfinish'd stands;

Stands as erst the builders left it,
When she sunk into her grave.
Mountain greensward paves the chancel;
Harebells flower in the nave.

"In my Castle all is sorrow,"—
Said the Duchess Marguerite then.
"Guide me, vassals, to the mountains!
We will build the Church again."—

Sandall'd palmers, faring homeward,
Austrian knights from Syria came.
"Austrian wanderers bring, O warders,
Homage to your Austrian dame."—

From the gate the warders answer'd;
"Gone, O knights, is she you knew.
Dead our Duke, and gone his Duchess.
Seek her at the Church of Brou."—

Austrian knights and march-worn palmers
Climb the winding mountain way.
Reach the valley, where the Fabric
Rises higher day by day.

THE CHURCH OF BROU

Stones are sawing, hammers ringing ;
  On the work the bright sun shines :
In the Savoy mountain meadows,
  By the stream, below the pines.

On her palfrey white the Duchess
  Sate and watch'd her working train ;
Flemish carvers, Lombard gilders,
  German masons, smiths from Spain.

Clad in black, on her white palfrey ;
  Her old architect beside—
There they found her in the mountains,
  Morn and noon and eventide.

There she sate, and watch'd the builders,
  Till the Church was roof'd and done.
Last of all, the builders rear'd her
  In the nave a tomb of stone.

On the tomb two Forms they sculptur'd,
  Lifelike in the marble pale.
One, the Duke in helm and armour ;
  One, the Duchess in her veil.

Round the tomb the carv'd stone fret-work
  Was at Easter tide put on.
Then the Duchess clos'd her labours ;
  And she died at the St. John.

II

The Church

Upon the glistening leaden roof
Of the new Pile, the sunlight shines.
The stream goes leaping by.
The hills are cloth'd with pines sun-proof.
'Mid bright green fields, below the pines,
Stands the Church on high.
What Church is this, from men aloof?
'Tis the Church of Brou.

At sunrise, from their dewy lair
Crossing the stream, the kine are seen
Round the wall to stray;
The churchyard wall that clips the square
Of shaven hill-sward trim and green
Where last year they lay.
But all things now are order'd fair
Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays, at the matin chime.
The Alpine peasants, two and three,
Climb up here to pray.
Burghers and dames, at summer's prime,
Ride out to church from Chambery,
Dight with mantles gay.
But else it is a lonely time
Round the Church of Brou.

On Sundays too a priest doth come
From the wall'd town beyond the pass,
Down the mountain way.
And then you hear the organ's hum,
You hear the white-rob'd priest say mass,
And the people pray.
But else the woods and fields are dumb
Round the Church of Brou.

And after church, when mass is done,
The people to the nave repair
Round the Tomb to stray.
And marvel at the Forms of stone,
And praise the chisell'd broideries rare.
Then they drop away.
The Princely Pair are left alone
In the Church of Brou.

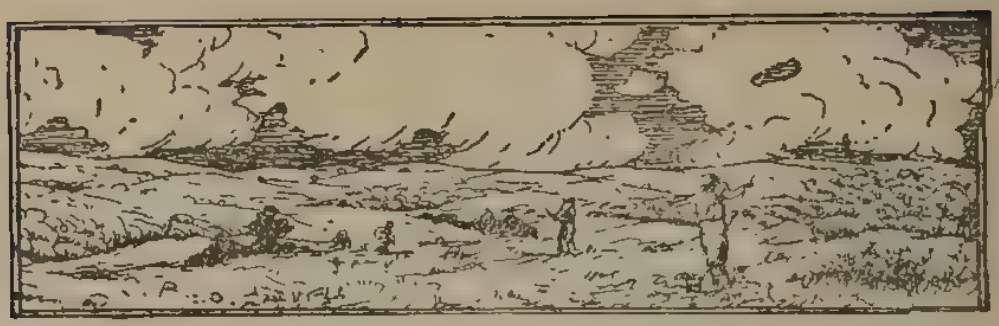
III

The Tomb

So rest, for ever rest, O Princely Pair!
In your high Church, 'mid the still mountain air,
Where horn, and hound, and vassals, never come.
Only the blessed Saints are smiling dumb
From the rich painted windows of the nave
On aisle, and transept, and your marble grave:

Where thou, young Prince, shalt never more
arise
From the fring'd mattress where thy Duchess
lies,
On autumn mornings, when the bugle sounds,
And ride across the drawbridge with thy
hounds
To hunt the boar in the crisp woods till eve.
And thou, O Princess, shalt no more receive,
Thou and thy ladies, in the hall of state,
The jaded hunters with their bloody freight,
Coming benighted to the castle gate.
So sleep, for ever sleep, O Marble Pair!
Or, if ye wake, let it be then, when fair
On the carv'd Western Front a flood of light
Streams from the setting sun, and colours
bright.
Prophets, transfigur'd Saints, and Martyrs
brave,
In the vast western window of the nave;
And on the pavement round the Tomb there
glints
A chequer-work of glowing sapphire tints,
And amethyst, and ruby;—then unclose
Your eyelids on the stone where ye repose,
And from your broider'd pillows lift your
heads,
And rise upon your cold white marble beds;
And looking down on the warm rosy tints
That chequer, at your feet, the illumin'd
flints,

Say—"*What is this? we are in bliss—for-*
given—
Behold the pavement of the courts of
Heaven!"—
Or let it be on autumn nights, when rain
Doth rustlingly above your heads complain
On the smooth leaden roof, and on the walls
Shedding her pensive light at intervals
The Moon through the clere-story windows
shines,
And the wind wails among the mountain
pines.
Then, gazing up through the dim pillars
high,
The foliag'd marble forest where ye lie,
"*Hush*"—ye will say—"*it is eternity.*
This is the glimmering verge of Heaven, and
these
The columns of the Heavenly Palaces."—
And in the sweeping of the wind your ear
The passage of the Angels' wings will hear,
And on the lichen-crusted leads above
The rustle of the eternal rain of Love.



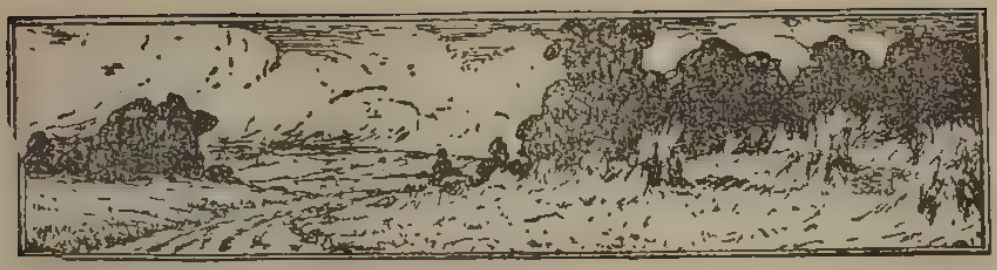
REQUIESCAT

STREW on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew.
In quiet she reposes :
Ah ! would that I did too.

Her mirth the world required :
She bath'd it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample Spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty Hall of Death.

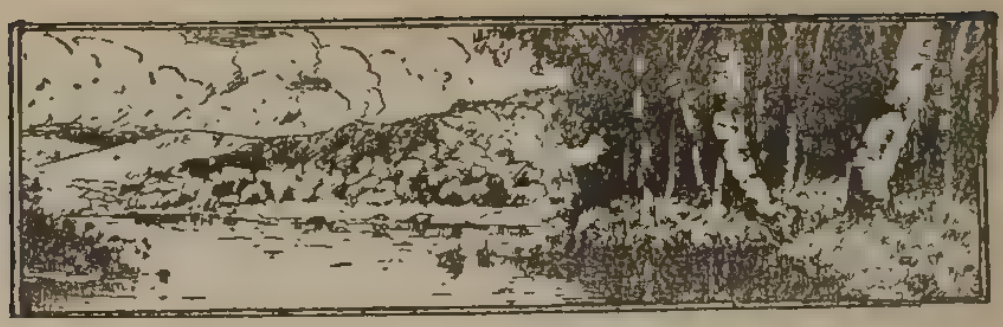


A QUESTION: TO FAUSTA

Joy comes and goes : hope ebbs and flows,
Like the wave.
Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men.
Love lends life a little grace,
A few sad smiles : and then,
Both are laid in one cold place,
In the grave.

Dreams dawn and fly : friends smile and die,
Like spring flowers.
Our vaunted life is one long funeral.
Men dig graves, with bitter tears,
For their dead hopes ; and all,
Maz'd with doubts, and sick with fears,
Count the hours.

We count the hours : these dreams of ours,
False and hollow,
Shall we go hence and find they are not dead?
Joys we dimly apprehend,
Faces that smiled and fled,
Hopes born here, and born to end,
Shall we follow?



IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

If, in the silent mind of One all-pure,
At first imagin'd lay
The sacred world ; and by procession sure
From those still deeps, in form and colour drest,
Seasons alternating, and night and day,
The long-mused thought to north, south, east, and west
Took then its all-seen way :

O waking on a world which thus-wise springs!
Whether it needs thee count
Betwixt thy waking and the birth of things
Ages or hours : O waking on Life's stream !
By lonely pureness to the all-pure Fount
(Only by this thou canst) the colour'd dream
Of Life remount.

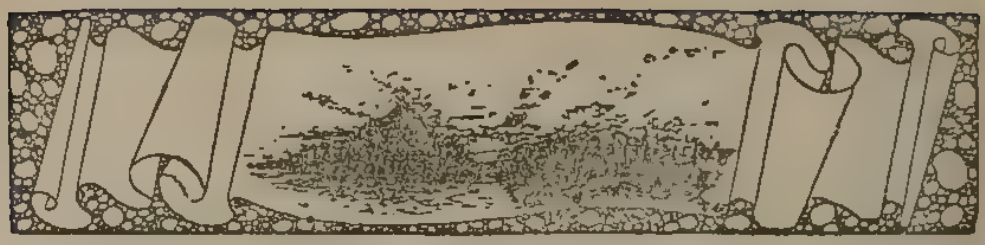
Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow ;
And faint the city gleams ;
Rare the lone pastoral huts : marvel not thou!
The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,

But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams:
Alone the sun arises, and alone
Spring the great streams.

But, if the wild unfather'd mass no birth
In divine seats hath known:
In the blank, echoing solitude, if Earth,
Rocking her obscure body to and fro,
Ceases not from all time to heave and groan,
Unfruitful oft, and, at her happiest throe,
Forms, what she forms, alone:

O seeming sole to awake, thy sun-bath'd head
Piercing the solemn cloud
Round thy still dreaming brother-world outspread!
O man, whom Earth, thy long-vext mother, bare
Not without joy; so radiant, so endow'd—
(Such happy issue crown'd her painful care)
Be not too proud!

Oh when most self-exalted most alone,
Chief dreamer, own thy dream!
Thy brother-world stirs at thy feet unknown;
Who hath a monarch's hath no brother's part;
Yet doth thine inmost soul with yearning teem.
Oh what a spasm shakes the dreamer's heart——
"*I too but seem!*"



THE SECOND BEST

MODERATE tasks and moderate leisure,
Quiet living, strict-kept measure
Both in suffering and in pleasure—
'Tis for this thy nature yearns.

But so many books thou readest,
But so many schemes thou breedest,
But so many wishes feedest,
That thy poor head almost turns.

And (the world's so madly jangled,
Human things so fast entangled)
Nature's wish must now be strangled
For that best which she discerns.

So it *must* be! yet, while leading
A strain'd life, while overfeeding,
Like the rest, his wit with reading,
No small profit that man earns,

Who through all he meets can steer him,
Can reject what cannot clear him,
Cling to what can truly cheer him;
Who each day more surely learns

THE SECOND BEST

That an impulse, from the distance
Of his deepest, best existence,
To the words "Hope, Light, Persistence,"
Strongly stirs and truly burns.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AN EPISODE

And the first gray of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep:
Sohrab alone, he slept not: all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the gray dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.
Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood
Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere:

Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that
low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink, the spot where first
a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the
land.
The men of former times had crown'd the
top
With a clay fort: but that was fall'n; and
now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and
stood
Upon the thick-piled carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's
sleep;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—
"Who art thou? for it is not yet clear
dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?"
But Sohrab came to the bedside, and
said:—
"Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa: it is I.
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.

For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
In Samarcand, before the army march'd;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first
I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,
I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
And beat the Persians back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
Rustum, my father; who, I hoped, should greet,
Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hoped, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
Let the two armies rest to-day: but I
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man: if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
Dim is the rumour of a common fight,

Where host meets host, and many names are
sunk:
But of a single combat Fame speaks clear."
He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and
said:—
"O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with
us
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen?
Or, if indeed this one desire rules all,
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through
fight:
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
But far hence seek him, for he is not
here.
For now it is not as when I was young,
When Rustum was in front of every fray:
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.
Whether that his own mighty strength at
last
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age;
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
There go!—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart
forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.

Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain:—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening? and who govern Rustum's son?
Go: I will grant thee what thy heart desires."
So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
And on his head he placed his sheep-skin cap,
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul:
And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
His herald to his side, and went abroad.
The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands:
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
Into the open plain; so Haman bade;

Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd:
As when, some gray November morn, the files,
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes,
Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board; so they stream'd.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came

From far, and a more doubtful service
own'd;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder
hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern
waste,
Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who
stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.
These all filed out from camp into the plain.
And on the other side the Persians form'd:
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they
seem'd,
The Ilyats of Khorassan: and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
Marshall'd battalions bright in burnished
steel.
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
And with his staff kept back the foremost
ranks.
And when Ferood, who led the Persians,
saw
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he came,
And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where
they stood.
And the old Tartar came upon the sand

Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said :—
"Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian lords
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man."
As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.
But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow;
Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—

In single file they move, and stop their
breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging
snows—
So the pale Persians held their breath with
fear.
And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up
To counsel: Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King:
These came and counsell'd; and then Gudurz
said:—
"Ferood, shame bids us take their
challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this
youth.
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart:
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's
name.
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge
up."
So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and
said:—
"Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man."
He spoke; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and
strode

Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitch'd: the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum: his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood beside him, charged with food;
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand;
And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—
"Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.

What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink."
But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said:—
"Not now: a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day: to-day has other needs.
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze:
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords
To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,
Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose."
He spoke: but Rustum answer'd with a smile:—
"Go to! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I
Am older: if the young are weak, the King
Errs strangely: for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
Himself is young, and honours younger men,
And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.

For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
For would that I myself had such a son,
And not that one slight helpless girl I have,
A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
And he has none to guard his weak old age.
There would I go, and hang my armour up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more."
He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply:—
"What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men should say,
Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men."

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply :—
"O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
But who for men of nought would do great deeds?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
In single fight with any mortal man."
He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And from the fluted spine atop a plume
Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.

So arm'd he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,
Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,
Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
Did in Bokhara by the river find
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest;
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know:
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.
And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,

And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swathe
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
And on each side are squares of standing corn,
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare;
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw
Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.
As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum ey'd
The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs: long he perused
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;

Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—
"O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me: I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe:
Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
Be govern'd: quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die.
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."
So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum; and he saw

His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Has builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
Streak'd with its first gray hairs: hope fill'd
his soul;
And he ran forwards and embraced his knees,
And clasp'd his hand within his own and
said:—
"Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own
soul!
Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou
not he?"
But Rustum ey'd askance the kneeling
youth,
And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul:
"Ah me, I muse what this young fox
may mean.
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say--*Rustum is here*—
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous
gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast day, in Afrasiab's hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—
'I challeng'd once, when the two armies
camp'd
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords

To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank; only Rustum dar'd: then he and I
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.
Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through me."
And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—
"Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
By challenge forth: make good thy vaunt, or yield.
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this;
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield;
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,

Oxus in summer wash them all away."
He spoke: and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—
"Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so.
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
Begin: thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—
But yet Success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know:
Only the event will teach us in its hour."

He spoke; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
His spear: down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds
Drops like a plummet: Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the spear
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
Which it sent flying wide:—then Sohrab threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield: sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
Could wield: an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
Still rough; like those which men in treeless plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,
And strewn the channels with torn boughs; so huge

The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand:
And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd his sword,
And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand:
But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:—
"Thou strik'st too hard: that club of thine will float
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
But rise, and be not wroth; not wroth am I:
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum: be it so.
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too;
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
And heard their hollow roar of dying men;

But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart?
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight; fight them, when they confront thy spear.
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!"
He ceased: but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage: his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,
The baleful sign of fevers: dust had soil'd
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.

His breast heaved; his lips foam'd; and twice his voice
Was choked with rage: at last these words broke way:—
"Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
Fight; let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war: I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!
Remember all thy valour: try thy feints
And cunning. all the pity I had is gone:
Because thou hast sham'd me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."
He spoke; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword: at once they rush'd
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west: their shields

Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees: such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And labouring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out: the steel-spik'd spear
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,

Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
Never till now defiled, sunk to the dust ;
And Rustum bow'd his head ; but then the gloom
Grew blacker : thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry :
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day
Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand :—
The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
And struck again ; and again Rustum bow'd
His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone.
Then Rustum rais'd his head : his dreadful eyes
Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted, *Rustum!* Sohrab heard that shout,

And shrank amazed: back he recoil'd one step,
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing Form:
And then he stood bewilder'd; and he dropp'd
His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd his side.
He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground.
And then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair;
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.
Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:—
"Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.

Fool! thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."
And with a fearless mien Sohrab replied:—
"Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I match'd with ten such men as thou,
And I were he who till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that beloved name unnerved my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to hear!
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!"
As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,

Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow'd her to find her where she fell
Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers: never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by:—
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss—
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not.
But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said:—
"What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son."
And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:—
"Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,

Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here ;
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son !
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be !
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen !
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old King, her father, who grows gray
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear ;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more ;
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far distant Oxus, he is slain."
He spoke ; and as he ceased he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke ; but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son

Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew ;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all :
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms ;
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he ; yet he listen'd, plunged in thought ;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon : tears gathered in his eyes ;
For he remembered his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture ; as, at dawn,
The Shepherd from his mountain lodge descries
A far bright City, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds ;—so Rustum saw
His youth ; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom ;
And that old King, her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy ; and all the pleasant life they led,

They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass;—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said:—
"O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd!
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false;—thou art not Rustum's son.
For Rustum had no son: one child he had—
But one—a girl: who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war."
But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now

The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew
fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die;
But first he would convince his stubborn
foe—
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—
"Man, who art thou who dost deny my
words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from
mine.
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother
gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she
bore."
He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's
cheeks;
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his
hand,
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud:
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—
"Sohrab, that were a proof which could
not lie.
If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's
son."
Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab
loos'd

His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands:—
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
Rustum s great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.
Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd, and lov'd—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that figure on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said:—
"How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?"
He spoke: but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood

Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp
cry—
O Boy—thy Father!—and his voice chok'd
there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his
eyes,
And his head swam, and he sunk down to
earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and
cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his
lips,
And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his
cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life: and life
Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his
eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he
seiz'd
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd
his hair,
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering
arms:
And strong convulsive groanings shook his
breast,
And his sobs chok'd him; and he clutch'd
his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his
hands,

And with a soothing voice he spoke, and
said :—
"Father, forbear : for I but meet to-day
The doom that at my birth was written
down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's un-
conscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke
too,
I know it : but Fate trod those promptings
down
Under its iron heel ; Fate, Fate engag'd
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's
spear.
But let us speak no more of this : I find
My father ; let me feel that I have found.
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my
cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say,
'My Son!'
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands
of life,
And swift ; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in Heaven that this should
be."
So said he : and his voice releas'd the
heart

Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts
When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other mov'd
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:—
"Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints,
When first they bore thy Master to this field."
But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said:—
"Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed!

My terrible father's terrible horse; and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said—'O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!'
—but I
Have never known my grand-sire's furrow'd face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream:
But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream—
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied :—

"Oh that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!"

And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied :—

"Desire not that, my father; thou must live.
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age.
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come: thou seest this great host of men
Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these:
Let me entreat for them: what have they done?
They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
But carry me with thee to Seistan,
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,

And plant a far-seen pillar over all :
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill—
And I be not forgotten in my grave."
And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :—
" Fear not ; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be : for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me.
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all :
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host : yea, let them go :
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,

And through whose death I won that fame I have ;
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown ;
So thou mightest live too, my Son, my Son !
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine ; and I might die, not thou ;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;
And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,*
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end.—
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age ;
And I shall never end this life of blood."

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :—

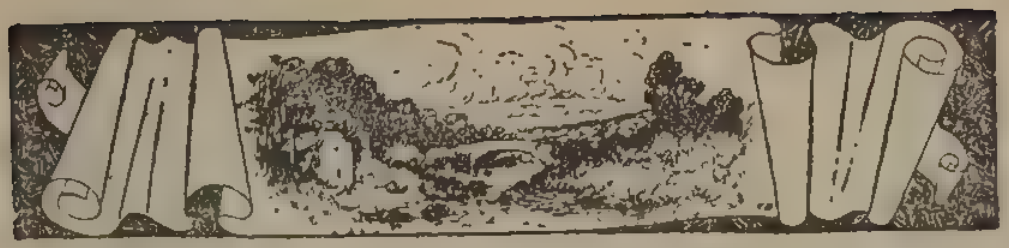
" A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man !
But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now ;
Not yet : but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted Ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear Master in his grave."

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face, and said :—

"Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that sea!
Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure."
He spoke; and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
His wound's imperious anguish: but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream: all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent pour'd, dim now, and soil'd,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
By romping children, whom their nurses call
From the hot fields at noon: his head droop'd low,
His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes clos'd; only when heavy gasps,
Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,
Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,
And fix'd them feebly on his father's face:
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,

And youth and bloom, and this delightful
world.
So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead ;
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's
cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead
son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-
rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now 'mid their broken flights of
steps,
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain
side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
And night came down over the solemn
waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole
pair,
And darken'd all ; and a cold fog, with
night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog : for now
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their
meal :
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward ; the Tartars by the river marge :
And Rustum and his son were left alone.
But the majestic River floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,

Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon : he flow'd
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large : then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents ; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer :—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.



THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

HUSSEIN.

O MOST just Vizier, send away
The cloth-merchants, and let them be,
Them and their dues, this day! the King
Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.

THE VIZIER.

O merchants, tarry yet a day
Here in Bokhara! but at noon
To-morrow, come, and ye shall pay
Each fortieth web of cloth to me,
As the law is, and go your way.
O Hussein, lead me to the King.
Thou teller of sweet tales, thine own,
Ferdousi's, and the others', lead.
How is it with my lord?

HUSSEIN.

Alone,
Ever since prayer-time, he doth wait.
O Vizier! without lying down,
In the great window of the gate,
Looking into the Registàn:
Where through the sellers' booths the slaves
Are this way bringing the dead man—
O Vizier, here is the King's door!

THE KING.

O Vizier, I may bury him?

THE VIZIER.

O King, thou know'st, I have been sick
These many days, and heard no thing,
(For Allah shut my ears and mind),
Nor even what thou dost, O King!
Wherefore, that I may counsel thee,
Let Hussein, if thou wilt, make haste
To speak in order what hath chanc'd.

THE KING.

O Vizier, be it as thou say'st!

HUSSEIN.

Three days since, at the time of prayer,
A certain Moollah, with his robe
All rent, and dust upon his hair,
Watch'd my lord's coming forth, and push'd
The golden mace-bearers aside,
And fell at the King's feet, and cried:

"Justice, O King, and on myself!
On this great sinner, who hath broke
The law, and by the law must die!
Vengeance, O King!"

But the King spoke:
"What fool is this, that hurts our ears

The Sick King in Bokhara.

"Justice, O King, and on myself!
On this great sinner, who hath broke
The law, and by the law must die."

With folly? or what drunken slave?
My guards, what, prick him with your
spears!
Prick me the fellow from the path!"
As the King said, so was it done,
And to the mosque my lord pass'd on.

But on the morrow, when the King
Went forth again, the holy book
Carried before him, as is right,
And through the square his path he took;
My man comes running, fleck'd with blood
From yesterday, and falling down
Cries out most earnestly; "O King,
My lord, O King, do right, I pray!

"How canst thou, ere thou hear, discern
If I speak folly? but a king,
Whether a thing be great or small,
Like Allah, hears and judges all.

"Wherefore hear thou! Thou know'st, how fierce
In these last days the sun hath burn'd;
That the green water in the tanks
Is to a putrid puddle turn'd;
And the canal, that from the stream
Of Samarcand is brought this way,
Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

"Now I at nightfall had gone forth
Alone, and in a darksome place
Under some mulberry-trees I found
A little pool; and in brief space,
With all the water that was there
I fill'd my pitcher, and stole home
Unseen: and having drink to spare,
I hid the can behind the door,
And went up on the roof to sleep.

"But in the night, which was with wind
And burning dust, again I creep
Down, having fever, for a drink.

"Now meanwhile had my brethren found
The water-pitcher, where it stood
Behind the door upon the ground,
And call'd my mother; and they all,
As they were thirsty, and the night
Most sultry, drain'd the pitcher there;
That they sate with it, in my sight,
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

"Now mark! I, being fever'd, sick
(Most unblest also), at that sight
Brake forth, and curs'd them—dost thou hear?—
One was my mother——Now, do right!"

But my lord mused a space, and said:
"Send him away, Sirs, and make on!

It is some madman!" the King said:
As the King said, so was it done.

The morrow, at the self-same hour,
In the King's path, behold, the man,
Not kneeling, sternly fix'd: he stood
Right opposite, and thus began,
Frowning grim down:—"Thou wicked King,
Most deaf where thou shouldst most give ear!
What, must I howl in the next world,
Because thou wilt not listen here?

"What, wilt thou pray, and get thee grace,
And all grace shall to me be grudg'd?
Nay but, I swear, from this thy path
I will not stir till I be judg'd."

Then they who stood about the King
Drew close together and conferr'd;
Till that the King stood forth and said,
"Before the priests thou shalt be heard."

But when the Ulemas were met,
And the thing heard, they doubted not;
But sentenced him, as the law is,
To die by stoning on the spot.

Now the King charg'd us secretly:
"Ston'd must he be, the law stands so:
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way:
Forbid him not, but let him go."

So saying, the King took a stone,
And cast it softly : but the man,
With a great joy upon his face,
Kneel'd down, and cried not, neither ran.

So they, whose lot it was, cast stones ;
That they flew thick, and bruis'd him sore :
But he praised Allah with loud voice,
And remain'd kneeling as before.

My lord had covered up his face :
But when one told him, " He is dead,"
Turning him quickly to go in,
" Bring thou to me his corpse," he said.

And truly, while I speak, O King,
I hear the bearers on the stair ;
Wilt thou they straightway bring him in?
—Ho ! enter ye who tarry there !

THE VIZIER.

O King, in this I praise thee not !
Now must I call thy grief not wise.
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,
To find such favour in thine eyes?

Nay, were he thine own mother's son,
Still, thou art king, and the law stands.
It were not meet the balance swerv'd,
The sword were broken in thy hands.

But being nothing, as he is,
Why for no cause make sad thy face?
Lo, I am old! three kings, ere thee,
Have I seen reigning in this place.

But who, through all this length of time,
Could bear the burden of his years,
If he for strangers pain'd his heart
Not less than those who merit tears?

Fathers we *must* have, wife and child;
And grievous is the grief for these:
This pain alone, which *must* be borne,
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

But other loads than this his own
One man is not well made to bear,
Besides, to each are his own friends,
To mourn with him, and shew him care.

Look, this is but one single place,
Though it be great: all the earth round,
If a man bear to have it so,
Things which might vex him shall be found.

Upon the Russian frontier, where
The watchers of two armies stand
Near one another, many a man,
Seeking a prey unto his hand,

Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave :
They snatch also, towards Mervè,
The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,
And up from thence to Orgunjè.

And these all, labouring for a lord,
Eat not the fruit of their own hands :
Which is the heaviest of all plagues,
To that man's mind, who understands.

The kaffirs also (whom God curse !)
Vex one another, night and day :
There are the lepers, and all sick :
There are the poor, who faint alway.

All these have sorrow, and keep still,
Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.
Wilt thou have pity on all these ?
No, nor on this dead dog, O King !

THE KING.

O Vizier, thou art old, I young.
Clear in these things I cannot see.
My head is burning ; and a heat
Is in my skin, which angers me.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men !
They that bear rule, and are obey'd,
Unto a rule more strong than theirs
Are in their turn obedient made.

In vain therefore, with wistful eyes
Gazing up hither, the poor man,
Who loiters by the high-heap'd booths,
Below there, in the Registàn,

Says, "Happy he, who lodges there!
With silken raiment, store of rice,
And for this drought, all kinds of fruits,
Grape-syrup, squares of colour'd ice,

"With cherries served in drifts of snow."
In vain hath a king power to build
Houses, arcades, enamell'd mosques;
And to make orchard closes, fill'd

With curious fruit trees, bought from far;
With cisterns for the winter rain;
And in the desert, spacious inns
In divers places;—if that pain

Is not more lighten'd, which he feels,
If his will be not satisfied:
And that it be not, from all time
The law is planted, to abide.

Thou wert a sinner, thou poor man!
Thou wert athirst; and didst not see,
That, though we snatch what we desire,
We must not snatch it eagerly.

And I have meat and drink at will,
And rooms of treasures, not a few.
But I am sick, nor heed I these;
And what I would, I cannot do.

Even the great honour which I have,
When I am dead, will soon grow still;
So have I neither joy, nor fame.
But what I can do, that I will.

I have a fretted brick-work tomb
Upon a hill on the right hand,
Hard by a close of apricots,
Upon the road of Samarcand.

Thither, O Vizier, will I bear
This man my pity could not save:
And, tearing up the marble flags,
There lay his body in my grave.

Bring water, nard, and linen rolls.
Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb.
Then say: "He was not wholly vile,
Because a king shall bury him."

BALDER DEAD

AN EPISODE

1. SENDING

So on the floor lay Balder dead; and round
Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts, and spears,
Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown
At Balder, whom no weapon pierced or clove;
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw—
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.
And all the Gods and all the Heroes came,
And stood round Balder on the bloody floor,
Weeping and wailing; and Valhalla rang
Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries;
And on the tables stood the untasted meats,
And in the horns and gold-rimm'd sculls the wine.

And now would Night have fall'n, and found
them yet
Wailing ; but otherwise was Odin's will.
And thus the Father of the Ages spake :—
"Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of
wail !
Not to lament in was Valhalla made,
If any here might weep for Balder's death,
I most might weep, his Father ; such a son
I lose to-day, so bright, so lov'd a God.
But he has met that doom, which long ago
The Nornies, when his mother bare him, spun,
And fate set seal, that so his end must be.
Balder has met his death, and ye survive—
Weep him an hour, but what can grief avail ?
For you yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet
your doom,
All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,
And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all.
But ours we shall not meet, when that day
comes,
With woman's tears and weak complaining
cries—
Why should we meet another's portion so ?
Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,
With cold dry eyes, and hearts compos'd
and stern,
To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven.
By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,
The Foe, the Accuser, whom, though Gods,
we hate,

Be strictly car'd for, in the appointed day.
Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning dawns,
Bring wood to the seashore to Balder's ship,
And on the deck build high a funeral-pile,
And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and put
Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea
To burn ; for that is what the dead desire."
So having spoke, the King of Gods arose,
And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode ;
And from the hall of Heaven he rode away
To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,
The Mount, from whence his eye surveys the world.
And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs
To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men.
And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze
Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow ;
And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind,
Fair men, who live in holes under the ground ;
Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,
Nor towards Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods ;
For well he knew the Gods would heed his word,
And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre.

But in Valhalla all the Gods went back
From around Balder, all the Heroes went;
And left his body stretch'd upon the floor.
And on their golden chairs they sate again,
Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven;
And before each the cooks who serv'd them plac'd
New messes of the boar Serimner's flesh,
And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead.
So they, with pent-up hearts, and tearless eyes,
Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank,
While twilight fell, and sacred Night came on.
But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods
In Odin's halls, and went through Asgard streets,
And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd
Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the wall;
Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God.
Down to the margin of the roaring sea
He came, and sadly went along the sand,
Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs
Where in and out the screaming seafowl fly;
Until he came to where a gully breaks
Through the cliff-wall, and a fresh stream runs down

From the high moors behind, and meets the sea
There, in the glen, Fensaler stands, the house
Of Frea, honour'd Mother of the Gods,
And shows its lighted windows to the main.
There he went up, and pass'd the open doors ;
And in the hall he found those women old,
The Prophetesses, who by rite eterne
On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire
Both night and day ; and by the inner wall
Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,
With folded hands, revolving things to come.
To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said :—
"Mother, a child of bale thou bar'st in me !
For, first, thou barest me with blinded eyes,
Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven ;
And, after that, of ignorant witless mind
Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul ;
That I alone must take the branch from Lok,
The Foe, the Accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,
And cast it at the dear-lov'd Balder's breast
At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw—
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.
Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly,
For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven ?
Can I, O mother, bring them Balder back ?
Or—for thou know'st the Fates, and things allow'd—

Can I with Hela's power a compact strike,
And make exchange, and give my life for his?"
He spoke, the Mother of the Gods replied:—
"Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,
Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these?
That one, long portion'd with his doom of death,
Should change his lot, and fill another's life,
And Hela yield to this, and let him go!
On Balder Death hath laid her hand, not thee;
Nor doth she count this life a price for that.
For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,
Would freely die to purchase Balder back,
And wend themselves to Hela's gloomy realm.
For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven
Which Gods and Heroes lead, in feast and fray,
Waiting the darkness of the final times,
That one should grudge its loss for Balder's sake,
Balder their joy, so bright, so lov'd a God.
But Fate withstands, and laws forbid this way.
Yet in my secret mind one way I know,
Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail;
But much must still be tried, which shall but fail."
And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and said:—

"What way is this, O mother, that thou show'st?
Is it a matter which a God might try?"
And straight the Mother of the Gods replied:—
"There is a way which leads to Hela's realm,
Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven.
Who goes that way must take no other horse
To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse, alone.
Nor must he choose that common path of Gods
Which every day they come and go in Heaven,
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
Past Midgard Fortress, down to Earth and men.
But he must tread a dark untravell'd road
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and ride
Nine days, nine nights, towards the northern ice,
Through valleys deep-engulf'd, with roaring streams.
And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,
Not Bifrost, but that bridge a Damsel keeps,
Who tells the passing troops of dead their way
To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's realm.

And she will bid him northward steer his
course.
Then he will journey through no lighted land,
Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set;
But he must ever watch the northern Bear,
Who from her frozen height with jealous eye
Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south,
And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.
And straight he will come down to Ocean's
strand—
Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world,
And on whose marge the ancient Giants dwell.
But he will reach its unknown northern shore,
Far, far beyond the outmost Giant's home,
At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow.
And he will fare across the dismal ice
Northward, until he meets a stretching wall
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.
But then he must dismount, and on the ice
Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's horse,
And make him leap the grate, and come
within.
And he will see stretch round him Hela's
realm,
The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,
And hear the roaring of the streams of Hell.
And he will see the feeble, shadowy tribes,
And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's
throne.
Then he must not regard the wailful ghosts
Who all will flit, like eddying leaves, around;

But he must straight accost their solemn Queen,
And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,
Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven
For Balder, whom she holds by right below;
If haply he may melt her heart with words,
And make her yield, and give him Balder back."
She spoke; but Hoder answer'd her and said:—
"Mother, a dreadful way is this thou show'st;
No journey for a sightless God to go!"
And straight the Mother of the Gods replied:—
"Therefore thyselt thou shalt not go, my son.
But he whom first thou meetest when thou com'st
To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way,
Shall go; and I will be his guide unseen."
She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil,
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands,
But at the central hearth those Women old,
Who while the Mother spake had ceas'd their toil,
Began again to heap the sacred fire.
And Hoder turn'd, and left his mother's house,

Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea ;
And came again down to the roaring waves,
And back along the beach to Asgard went,
Pondering on that which Frea said should be.
But Night came down, and darken'd Asgard streets
Then from their loathéd feasts the Gods arose,
And lighted torches, and took up the corpse
Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall,
And laid it on a bier, and bare him home
Through the fast-darkening streets to his own house,
Breidablik, on whose columns Balder grav'd
The enchantments that recall the dead to life.
For wise he was, and many curious arts,
Postures of runes, and healing herbs he knew ;
Unhappy ! but that art he did not know,
To keep his own life safe, and see the sun.
There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,
And each bespake him as he laid him down :—
" Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne
Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,
So thou might'st live, and still delight the Gods ! "
They spake ; and each went home to his own house.
But there was one, the first of all the Gods

For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven;
Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,
Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house,
Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,
Against the harbour, by the city-wall.
Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up
From the sea cityward, and knew his step;
Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,
For it grew dark; but Hoder touch'd his arm.
And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers
Brushes across a tired traveller's face
Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,
On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,
And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by—
So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said:—
"Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with dawn
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back;
And they shall be thy guides, who have the power."
He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappear'd.
And Hermod gaz'd into the night, and said:—
"Who is it utters through the dark his hest
So quickly, and will wait for no reply?

The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's
voice.
Howbeit I will see, and do his hest ;
For there rang note divine in that command."
So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod came
Home, and lay down to sleep in his own
house ;
And all the Gods lay down in their own
homes.
And Hoder too came home, distraught with
grief,
Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods ;
And he went in, and shut the door, and fixt
His sword upright, and fell on it, and died.
But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,
The throne, from which his eye surveys the
world ;
And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode
To Asgard. And the stars came out in
heaven,
High over Asgard, to light home the King.
But fiercely Odin gallop'd, mov'd in heart ;
And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came.
And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang
Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets,
And the Gods trembled on their golden beds
Hearing the wrathful Father coming home—
For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came.
And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left
Sleipner ; and Sleipner went to his own stall,
And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.

But in Breidablik, Nanna, Balder's wife,
Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,
And stood round Balder lying on his bier.
And at his head and feet she station'd Scalds
Who in their lives were famous for their song;
These o'er the corpse inton'd a plaintive strain,
A dirge—and Nanna and her train replied.
And far into the night they wail'd their dirge.
But when their souls were satisfied with wail,
They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went
Into an upper chamber, and lay down;
And Frea seal'd her tired lids with sleep.
And 'twas when Night is bordering hard on Dawn,
When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low;
Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,
In garb, in form, in feature as he was,
Alive; and still the rays were round his head
Which were his glorious mark in Heaven; he stood
Over against the curtain of the bed,
And gaz'd on Nanna as she slept, and spake:—
"Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st thy woe!

Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,
Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek ; but thou,
Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep.
Sleep on ; I watch thee, and am here to aid.
Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul !
Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.
For with to-morrow's dawn the Gods prepare
To gather wood, and build a funeral-pile
Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,
That sad, sole honour of the dead ; and thee
They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,
With me, for thus ordains the common rite.
But it shall not be so ; but mild, but swift,
But painless shall a stroke from Frea come,
To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,
And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee.
And well I know that by no stroke of death,
Tardy or swift, would'st thou be loath to die,
So it restor'd thee, Nanna, to my side,
Whom thou so well hast lov'd ; but I can smooth
Thy way, and this, at least, my prayers avail.
Yes, and I fain would altogether ward
Death from thy head, and with the Gods in Heaven
Prolong thy life, though not by thee desir'd—
But Right bars this, not only thy desire.
Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead

In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm;
And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,
Whom Hela with austere controul presides.
For of the race of Gods is no one there,
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn Queen;
And all the nobler souls of mortal men
On battle-field have met their death, and now
Feast in Valhalla, in my Father's hall;
Only the inglorious sort are there below,
The old, the cowards, and the weak are there—
Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay.
But even there, O Nanna, we might find
Some solace in each other's look and speech,
Wandering together through that gloomy world,
And talking of the life we led in Heaven,
While we yet liv'd, among the other Gods."
He spake, and straight his lineaments began
To fade; and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out
Her arms towards him with a cry—but he
Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd.
And as the woodman sees a little smoke.
Hang in the air, afield, and disappear,
So Balder faded in the night away.
And Nanna on her bed sank back; but then

Frea, the Mother of the Gods, with stroke
Painless and swift, set free her airy soul,
Which took, on Balder's track, the way below;
And instantly the sacred Morn appear'd.

2. JOURNEY TO THE DEAD

FORTH from the East, up the ascent of Heaven,
Day drove his courser with the Shining Mane;
And in Valhalla, from his gable-perch,
The golden-crested Cock began to crow.
Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night,
With shrill and dismal cries that Bird shall crow,
Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven;
But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note,
To wake the Gods and Heroes to their tasks.
And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke.
And from their beds the Heroes rose, and donn'd
Their arms, and led their horses from the stall,
And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court
Were rang'd; and then the daily fray began.
And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn,

'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and blood;
But all at night return to Odin's hall,
Woundless and fresh; such lot is theirs in Heaven.
And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth
Toward Earth and fights of men; and at their side
Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode;
And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
Past Midgard fortress, down to Earth they came;
There through some battle-field, where men fall fast,
Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride,
And pick the bravest warriors out for death,
Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven
To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall.
But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,
Into the tilt-yard, where the Heroes fought,
To feast their eyes with looking on the fray;
Nor did they to their Judgment-Place repair
By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,
Where they hold council, and give laws for men.
But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,
To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold;
Where are in circle rang'd twelve golden chairs,
And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne.

There all the Gods in silence sate them down ;
And thus the Father of the Ages spake :—
"Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,
With all, which it beseems the dead to have,
And make a funeral-pile on Balder's ship ;
On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.
But Hermod, thou, take Sleipner, and ride down
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back."
So said he ; and the Gods arose, and took
Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor,
Shouldering his Hammer, which the Giants know.
Forth wended they, and drove their steeds before.
And up the dewy mountain tracks they far'd
To the dark forests, in the early dawn ;
And up and down, and side and slant they roam'd
And from the glens all day an echo came
Of crashing falls ; for with his hammer Thor
Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines,
And burst their roots, while to their tops the Gods
Made fast the woven ropes, and hal'd them down,
And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the sward,

And bound the logs behind their steeds to
draw,
And drove them homeward; and the snort-
ing steeds
When straining through the crackling brush-
wood down,
And by the darkling forest paths the Gods
Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried
boughs.
And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd
Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,
And loos'd them of their loads on the sea-
shore,
And rang'd the wood in stacks by Balder's
ship;
And every God went home to his own house.
But when the Gods were to the forest
gone,
Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth
And saddled him; before that, Sleipner
brook'd
No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,
On his broad back no lesser rider bore;
Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,
Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,
Knowing the God they went to seek, how
dear.
But Hermod mounted him, and sadly far'd
In silence up the dark untravell'd road
Which branches from the north of Heaven,
and went

All day; and Daylight waned, and Night came on.
And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,
Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,
Through valleys deep-engulf'd, by roaring streams.
And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,
And on the bridge a Damsel watching arm'd,
In the strait passage at the farther end,
Where the road issues between walling rocks.
Scant space that Warder left for passers by;—
But as when cowherds in October drive
Their kine across a snowy mountain-pass
To winter-pasture on the southern side,
And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way,
Wedg'd in the snow; then painfully the hinds
With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,
Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow
To right and left, and warm steam fills the air—
So on the bridge that Damsel block'd the way,
And question'd Hermod as he came, and said:—
"Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse
Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream

Rumbles and shakes? Tell me thy race and
home.
But yestermorn, five troops of dead pass'd by,
Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,
Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone.
And thou hast flesh and colour on thy cheeks,
Like men who live, and draw the vital air;
Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men
deceas'd,
Souls bound below, my daily passers here."
And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd
her:—
"O Damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son
Of Odin; and my high-roof'd house is built
Far hence, in Asgard, in the City of Gods;
And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride.
And I come, sent this road on Balder's track;
Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge
or no?"
He spake; the Warder of the bridge re-
plied:—
"O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods
Or of the horses of the Gods resound
Upon my bridge; and, when they cross,
I know.
Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the
road
Below there, to the north, toward Hela's
realm.
From here the cold white mist can be
discern'd,

Not lit with sun, but through the darksome air
By the dim vapour-blotted light of stars,
Which hangs over the ice where lies the road.
For in that ice are lost those northern streams,
Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,
Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run,
The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne.
There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,
Hela's pale swarms; and there was Balder bound.
Ride on! pass free! but he by this is there."
She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left him room.
And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by
Across the bridge; then she took post again.
But northward Hermod rode, the way below;
And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun.
But by the blotted light of stars, he far'd.
And he came down to Ocean's northern strand,
At the drear ice, beyond the Giants' home.
Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice
Still north, until he met a stretching wall
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.
Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,
On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,

And made him leap the grate, and came within.
And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,
The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,
And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.
For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,
Outmost; the others near the centre run—
The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain;
These flow by Hela's throne, and near their spring.
And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy tribes;—
And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds
Of some clear river, issuing from a lake,
On autumn-days, before they cross the sea;
And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs
Swinging, and others skim the river-streams,
And their quick twittering fills the banks and shores—
So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts.
Women, and infants, and young men who died
Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields;
And old men, known to Glory, but their star
Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,
Not wounds; yet, dying, they their armour wore,

And now have chief regard in Hela's realm.
Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew,
Greeted of none, disfeatur'd and forlorn—
Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive;
And round them still the wattled hurdles hung,
Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them deep,
To hide their shameful memory from men.
But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne
Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,
And Hela set thereon, with countenance stern;
And thus bespake him first the solemn Queen:—
"Unhappy, how hast thou endured to leave
The light, and journey to the cheerless land
Where idly flit about the feeble shades?
How didst thou cross the bridge o'er Giall's stream,
Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore?
Or how o'erleap the grate that bars the wall?"
She spake: but down off Sleipner Hermod sprang,
And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her knees;
And spake, and mild entreated her, and said:—

"O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare
Their errands to each other, or the ways
They go? the errand and the way is known.
Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief we have in Heaven
For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right below.
Restore him! for what part fulfils he here?
Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,
And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy?
Not for such end, O Queen, thou hold'st thy realm.
For Heaven was Balder born, the City of Gods
And Heroes, where they live in light and joy.
Thither restore him, for his place is there!"
He spoke; and grave replied the solemn Queen:—
'Hermod, for he thou art, thou Son of Heaven!
A strange unlikely errand, sure, is thine.
Do the Gods send to me to make them blest?
Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtain'd.
Three mighty children to my Father Lok
Did Angerbode, the Giantess, bring forth—
Fenris the Wolf, the Serpent huge, and me.
Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,
Who since in your despite hath wax'd amain,
And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world;

Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw,
And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule ;
While on his island in the lake afar,
Made fast to the bor'd crag, by wile not strength
Subdu'd, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.
Lok still subsists in Heaven, our Father wise,
Your mate, though loath'd, and feasts in Odin's hall ;
But him too foes await, and netted snares,
And in a cave a bed of needle-rocks,
And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall.
Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds,
And with himself set us his offspring free,
When he guides Muspel's children to their bourne.
Till then in peril or in pain we live,
Wrought by the Gods—and ask the Gods our aid?
Howbeit, we abide our day ; till then,
We do not as some feebler haters do—
Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,
Helpless to better us, or ruin them.
Come then ! if Balder was so dear belov'd,
And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's—
Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restor'd.
Show me through all the world the signs of grief !

Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops!
Let all that lives and moves upon the earth
Weep him, and all that is without life weep;
Let Gods, men, brutes, beweep him; plants and stones!
So shall I know the lost was dear indeed,
And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven."
She spake; and Hermod answer'd her, and said:—
"Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.
But come, declare me this, and truly tell:
May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail,
Or is it here withheld to greet the dead?"
He spake, and straightway Hela answer'd him:—
"Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold
Converse; his speech remains, though he be dead."
And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and spake:—
"Even in the abode of Death, O Balder, hail!
Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,
The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven;
Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd.

For not unmindful of thee are the Gods,
Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell;
Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm.
And sure of all the happiest far art thou
Who ever have been known in Earth or Heaven;
Alive, thou wert of Gods the most belov'd,
And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side,
Here, and hast honour among all the dead."
He spake; and Balder utter'd him reply,
But feebly, as a voice far off; he said:—
"Hermod the nimble, gild me not my death!
Better to live a slave, a captur'd man,
Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,
Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead.
And now I count not of these terms as safe
To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,
Though I be lov'd, and many mourn my death;
For double-minded ever was the seed
Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give.
Howbeit, report thy message; and therewith,
To Odin, to my Father, take this ring,
Memorial of me, whether sav'd or no;
And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen
Me sitting here below by Hela's side,

Crown'd, having honour among all the dead."
He spake, and raised his hand, and gave the ring.
And with inscrutable regard the Queen
Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb.
But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more
Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn Queen ;
Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride
Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to Heaven.
And to the wall he came, and found the grate
Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice.
And o'er the ice he far'd to Ocean's strand,
And up from thence, a wet and misty road,
To the arm'd Damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream.
Worse was that way to go than to return,
For him ;—for others all return is barr'd.
Nine days he took to go, two to return,
And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven.
And as a traveller in the early dawn
To the steep edge of some great valley comes,
Through which a river flows, and sees, beneath,
Clouds of white rolling vapours fill the vale,

But o'er them, on the farther slope, descries
Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with sun—
So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven.
And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air
Of Heaven; and mightily, as wing'd, he flew.
And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise;
And he drew near, and heard no living voice
In Asgard; and the golden halls were dumb.
Then Hermod knew what labour held the Gods;
And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd
Under the gate-house to the sands, and found
The Gods on the sea-shore by Balder's ship.

3. FUNERAL

THE Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,
Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither borne;
And Hermod came down towards them from the gate.
And Lok, the Father of the Serpent, first
Beheld him come, and to his neighbour spake:—
"See, here is Hermod, who comes single back

From Hell; and shall I tell thee how he seems?
Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog,
One morn, at market, in a crowded town—
Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain,
And follows this man after that, for hours;
And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls
Before a stranger's threshold, not his home,
With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue
Hangs quivering out between his dust-smear'd jaws,
And piteously he eyes the passers by;
But home his master comes to his own farm,
Far in the country, wondering where he is—
So Hermod comes to-day unfollow'd home."
And straight his neighbour, mov'd with wrath, replied:—
"Deceiver! fair in form, but false in heart!
Enemy, Mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate—
Peace, lest our Father Odin hear thee gibe!
Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,
And bind thy carcase, like a bale, with cords,
And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim!
If clear from plotting Balder's death, to swim;
But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown,

And perish, against fate, before thy day."
So they two soft to one another spake.
But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw
His messenger; and he stood forth, and cried.
And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down,
And in his Father's hand put Sleipner's rein,
And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said:—
"Odin, my father, and ye, Gods of Heaven!
Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I come.
Into the joyless kingdom have I been,
Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes
Of ghosts, and commun'd with their solemn Queen;
And to your prayer she sends you this reply:
Show her through all the world the signs of grief!
Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops!
Let Gods, men, brutes, beweep him; plants and stones:
So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,
And bend her heart, and give you Balder back."
He spoke; and all the Gods to Odin look'd;
And straight the Father of the Ages said:—
"Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.

But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds,
And in procession all come near, and weep
Balder; for that is what the dead desire.
When ye enough have wept, then build a pile
Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire
Out of our sight; that we may turn from grief,
And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven."
He spoke, and the Gods arm'd; and Odin donn'd
His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold,
And led the way on Sleipner; and the rest
Follow'd, in tears, their Father and their King.
And thrice in arms around the dead they rode,
Weeping; the sands were wetted, and their arms,
With their thick-falling tears—so good a friend
They mourn'd that day, so bright, so lov'd a God.
And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands
On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail:—
"Farewell, O Balder, bright and lov'd, my son!
In that great day, the Twilight of the Gods,

When Muspel's children shall beleaguer
Heaven,
Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy
arm."
Thou camest near the next, O Warrior
Thor!
Shouldering thy Hammer, in thy chariot
drawn,
Swaying the long-hair'd Goats with silver'd
rein;
And over Balder's corpse these words didst
say:—
"Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome
land,
And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,
Now, and I know not how they prize thee
there—
But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and
mourn'd.
For haughty spirits and high wraths are
rife
Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven,
As among those whose joy and work is
war;
And daily strifes arise, and angry words.
But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,
Heard no one ever an injurious word
To God or Hero, but thou keptest back
The others, labouring to compose their
brawls.
Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind!

For we lose him, who smooth'd all strife in
Heaven."
He spake, and all the Gods assenting
wail'd.
And Freya next came nigh, with golden
tears;
The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all
Most honour'd after Frea, Odin's wife.
Her long ago the wandering Oder took
To mate, but left her to roam distant lands;
Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears
of gold.
Names hath she many; Vanadis on earth
They call her, Freya is her name in Heaven;
She in her hands took Balder's head, and
spake:—
"Balder, my brother, thou art gone a
road
Unknown and long, and haply on that way
My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast
met,
For in the paths of Heaven he is not found.
Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wert
To his neglected wife, and what he is,
And wring his heart with shame, to hear
thy word!
For he, my husband, left me here to pine,
Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart
First drove him from me into distant lands;
Since then I vainly seek him through the
world,

And weep from shore to shore my golden tears,
But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain.
Thou only, Balder, wert for ever kind,
To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say:
Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears!
One day the wandering Oder will return,
Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search
On some great road, or resting in an inn,
Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree.
So Balder said;—but Oder, well I know
My truant Oder I shall see no more
To the world's end; and Balder now is gone,
And I am left uncomforted in Heaven."
She spake; and all the Goddesses bewail'd.
Last from among the Heroes one came near,
No God, but of the Hero-troop the chief—
Regner, who swept the northern sea with fleets,
And rul'd o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,
Living; but Ella captur'd him and slew;—
A king whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,
Now time obscures it, and men's later deeds.
He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and said:—

"Balder, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven
Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage,
Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone.
And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear,
After the feast is done, in Odin's hall;
But they harp ever on one string, and wake
Remembrance in our soul of wars alone,
Such as on earth we valiantly have wag'd,
And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death.
But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike
Another note, and, like a bird in spring,
Thy voice of joyance minded us, and youth,
And wife, and children, and our ancient home.
Yes, and I, too, remember'd then no more
My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,
Nor Ella's victory on the English coast—
But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle,
And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend
Her flock along the white Norwegian beach.
Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy
Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead."

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd.
But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,
And soon had all that day been spent in wail;
But then the Father of the Ages said:—
"Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail!
Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship;
Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre."
But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they brought
The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,
Full the deck's breadth, and lofty; then the corpse
Of Balder on the highest top they laid,
With Nanna on his right, and on his left
Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew.
And they set jars of wine and oil to lean
Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,
Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine;
And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,
And slew the dogs which at his table fed,
And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he loved,

And threw them on the pyre, and Odin threw
A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.
They fixt the mast, and hoisted up the sails,
Then they put fire to the wood; and Thor
Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern
To push the ship through the thick sand; —sparks flew
From the deep trench she plough'd, so strong a God
Furrow'd it; and the water gurgled in.
And the Ship floated on the waves, and rock'd.
But in the hills a strong East-Wind arose,
And came down moaning to the sea; first squalls
Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd
The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire.
And wreath'd in smoke the Ship stood out to sea.
Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,
And the pile crackled; and between the logs
Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and leapt,
Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd
The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast,
And ate the shrivelling sails; but still the Ship

Drove on, ablaze above her hull with fire.
And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gaz'd.
And while they gaz'd, the Sun went lurid down
Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and Night came on.
Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm;
But through the dark they watch'd the burning Ship
Still carried o'er the distant waters on,
Farther and farther, like an Eye of Fire.
And as in the dark night a travelling man
Who bivouacs in a forest 'mid the hills,
Sees suddenly a spire of flame shoot up
Out of the black waste forest, far below,
Which woodcutters have lighted near their lodge
Against the wolves; and all night long it flares:—
So flar'd, in the far darkness, Balder's pyre
But fainter, as the Stars rose high, it burn'd,
The bodies were consum'd, ash chok'd the pile.
And as, in a decaying winter-fire,
A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks—
So with a shower of sparks the pile fell in,
Reddening the sea around; and all was dark.

But the Gods went by starlight up the shore
To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall
At table, and the funeral-feast began.
All night they ate the boar Serimner's flesh,
And from their horns, with silver rimm'd, drank mead,
Silent, and waited for the sacred Morn.
And Morning over all the world was spread.
Then from their loathéd feast the Gods arose,
And took their horses, and set forth to ride
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain ;
Thor came on foot, the rest on horseback rode.
And they found Mimir sitting by his Fount
Of Wisdom, which beneath the ashtree springs ;
And saw the Nornies watering the roots
Of that world-shadowing tree with Honey-dew.
There came the Gods, and sate them down on stones ;
An thus the Father of the Ages said :—
"Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Hermod brought.
Accept them or reject them ! both have grounds.
Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,

To leave for ever Balder in the grave,
An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.
But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail?—
Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd;
For dear-belov'd was Balder while he liv'd
In Heaven and Earth, and who would grudge him tears?
But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,
These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud.
Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way?—
Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods?
If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,
Mounted on Sleipner, with the Warrior Thor
Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons,
All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my train,
Should make irruption into Hela's realm,
And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,
And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven?"
He spake, and his fierce sons applauded loud.
But Frea, Mother of the Gods, arose,

Daughter and wife of Odin; thus she said:—

"Odin, thou Whirlwind, what a threat is this!
Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, even thine.
For of all Powers the mightiest far art thou,
Lord over men on Earth, and Gods in Heaven;
Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld
One thing—to undo what thou thyself hast rul'd.
For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee.
In the beginning, ere the Gods were born,
Before the Heavens were builded, thou didst slay
The Giant Ymir, whom the Abyss brought forth,
Thou and thy brethren fierce, the Sons of Bor,
And threw his trunk to choke the abysmal void.
But of his flesh and members thou didst build
The Earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven.
And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns,
Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest lights,

Sun, Moon, and Stars, which thou hast
hung in Heaven,
Dividing clear the paths of night and day.
And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard
Fort;
Then me thou mad'st; of us the Gods were
born.
Then, walking by the sea, thou foundest
spars
Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the
earth,
Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail.
And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,
Save one, Bergelmer;—he on shipboard
fled
Thy deluge, and from him the Giants
sprang.
But all that brood thou hast remov'd far
off,
And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell;
But Hela into Niflheim thou threw'st,
And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to
rule,
A Queen, and empire over all the dead.
That empire wilt thou now invade, light up
Her darkness, from her grasp a subject
tear?—
Try it; but I, for one, will not applaud.
Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight
Me and my words, though thou be first in
Heaven;

For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,
Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung;
And all that is to come I know, but lock
In my own breast, and have to none reveal'd.
Come then! since Hela holds by right her prey,
But offers terms for his release to Heaven,
Accept the chance; thou canst no more obtain.
Send through the world thy messengers; entreat
All living and unliving things to weep
For Balder; if thou haply thus may'st melt
Hela, and win the lov'd one back to Heaven."
She spake, and on her face let fall her veil,
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.
Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word;
Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods:
"Go quickly forth through all the world, and pray
All living and unliving things to weep
Balder, if haply he may thus be won."
When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and took
Their horses, and rode forth through all the world;

North, south, east, west, they struck, and roam'd the world
Entreating all things to weep Balder's death.
And all that liv'd, and all without life, wept.
And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,
At winter's end, before the spring begins,
And a warm west-wind blows, and thaw sets in—
After an hour a dripping sound is heard
In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow
Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes,
And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down;
And, in fields sloping to the south, dark plots
Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,
And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad—
So through the world was heard a dripping noise
Of all things weeping to bring Balder back;
And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.
But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he took
To show him spits and beaches of the sea
Far off, where some unwarn'd might fail to weep—
Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers know;
Not born in Heaven; he was in Vanheim rear'd,
With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods;
He knows each frith, and every rocky creek

Fring'd with dark pines, and sands where seafowl scream—
They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept.
And they rode home together, through the wood
Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies
Bordering the Giants, where the trees are iron;
There in the wood before a cave they came,
Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny Hag,
Toothless and old; she gibes the passers by.
Thok is she call'd, but now Lok wore her shape;
She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and said:—
"Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in Heaven,
That ye come pleasuring to Thok's Iron Wood?
Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites.
Look, as in some boor's yard a sweet-breath'd cow,
Whose manger is stuff'd full of good fresh hay,
Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head
To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet—
So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven!"
She spake; but Hermod answer'd her and said:—

"Thok, not for gibes we come, we come
for tears.
Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,
But will restore, if all things give him tears.
Begrudge not thine! to all was Balder dear."
Then, with a louder laugh, the Hag
replied:—
"Is Balder dead? and do ye come for tears?
Thok with dry eyes will weep o'er Balder's
pyre.
Weep him all other things, if weep they
will—
I weep him not! let Hela keep her prey."
She spake, and to the cavern's depth she
fled,
Mocking; and Hermod knew their toil was
vain.
And as seafaring men, who long have
wrought
In the great deep for gain, at last come
home,
And towards evening see the headlands rise
Of their own country, and can clear descry
A fire of wither'd furze which boys have lit
Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds
Out of a till'd field inland;—then the wind
Catches them, and drives out again to sea;
And they go long days tossing up and down
Over the gray sea-ridges, and the glimpse
Of port they had makes bitterer far their
toil—

So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their joy.
Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod spake:—
"It is the Accuser Lok, who flouts us all!
Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news;
I must again below, to Hela's realm."
He spoke; and Niord set forth back to Heaven.
But northward Hermod rode, the way below,
The way he knew; and travers'd Giall's stream,
And down to Ocean grop'd, and cross'd the ice,
And came beneath the wall, and found the grate
Still lifted; well was his return foreknown.
And once more Hermod saw around him spread
The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell.
But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound
Of Niflheim, he saw one ghost come near,
Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid—
Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew.
And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost,
And call'd him by his name, and sternly said:—
"Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and eyes!

Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulf
Of the deep inner gloom, but flittest here,
In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell,
Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne?
Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice,
Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay."
He spoke; but Hoder answer'd him, and said:—
"Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue
The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave?
For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom,
Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,
Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven;
And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by?
No less than Balder have I lost the light
Of Heaven, and communion with my kin;
I too had once a wife and once a child,
And substance, and a golden house in Heaven—
But all I left of my own act, and fled
Below, and dost thou hate me even here?
Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,
Though he has cause, have any cause; but he,
When that with downcast looks I hither came,

Stretch'd forth his hand, and with benignant
voice,
Welcome, he said, *if there be welcome here,*
Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me!
And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force
My hated converse on thee, came I up
From the deep gloom, where I will now
return;
But earnestly I long'd to hover near,
Not too far off, when that thou camest by;
To feel the presence of a brother God,
And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,
For the last time—for here thou com'st no
more."
He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner
gloom.
But Hermod stay'd him with mild words, and
said:—
"Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder
blind!
Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind
Was Lok's; the unwitting hand alone was
thine.
But Gods are like the sons of men in this—
When they have woe, they blame the nearest
cause.
Howbeit stay, and be appeas'd! and tell:
Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,
Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead?"
And the blind Hoder answer'd him and
spake:—

"His place of state remains by Hela's side,
But empty; for his wife, for Nanna came
Lately below, and join'd him; and the Pair
Frequent the still recesses of the realm
Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd.
But they too, doubtless, will have breath'd the balm,
Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,
And have drawn upward to this verge of Hell."
He spake; and, as he ceas'd, a puff of wind
Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside
Round where they stood, and they beheld Two Forms
Make towards them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.
And Hermod straight perceiv'd them, who they were
Balder and Nanna; and to Balder said:—
"Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a snare!
Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey.
No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge
In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy
The love all bear towards thee, nor train up
Forset, thy son, to be belov'd like thee.
Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age.
Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail!"
He spake; and Balder answer'd him, and said:—
"Hail and farewell! for here thou com'st no more.

Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt'st
In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,
As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn.
For Nanna hath rejoin'd me, who, of old,
In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side;
And still the acceptance follows me, which crown'd
My former life, and cheers me even here.
The iron frown of Hela is relax'd
When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead
Trust me, and gladly bring for my award
Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates—
Shadows of hates, but they distress them still."

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply:—
"Thou hast then all the solace death allows,
Esteem and function; and so far is well.
Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,
Rusting for ever; and the years roll on,
The generations pass, the ages grow,
And bring us nearer to the final day
When from the south shall march the Fiery Band
And cross the Bridge of Heaven, with Lok for guide,
And Fenris at his heel with broken chain;
While from the east the Giant Rymer steers
His ship, and the great Serpent makes to land;
And all are marshall'd in one flaming square

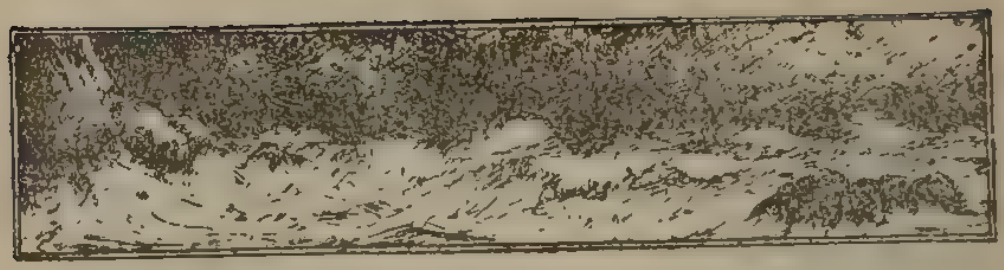
Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven,
I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then."
He spake; but Balder answer'd him, and said:—
"Mourn not for me! Mourn, Hermod, for the Gods;
Mourn for the men on earth, the Gods in Heaven,
Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day!
The day will come, when Asgard's towers shall fall,
And Odin, and his Sons, the seed of Heaven;
But what were I, to save them in that hour?
If strength could save them, could not Odin save,
My Father, and his pride, the Warrior Thor,
Vidar the Silent, the Impetuous Tyr?
I, what were I, when these can nought avail?
Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,
And the two Hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven
The golden-crested Cock shall sound alarm,
And his black Brother-Bird from hence reply,
And bucklers clash, and spears begin to pour—
Longing will stir within my breast, though vain
But not to me so grievous, as, I know,
To other Gods it were, is my enforc'd

Absence from fields where I could nothing aid;
For I am long since weary of your storm
Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life
Something too much of war and broils, which make
Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.
Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail;
Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for calm.
Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,
Unarm'd, inglorious; I attend the course
Of ages, and my late return to light,
In times less alien to a spirit mild,
In new-recover'd seats, the happier day."
He spake; and the fleet Hermod thus replied:—
"Brother, what seats are these, what happier day?
Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone."
And the ray-crowned Balder answer'd him:—
"Far to the south, beyond The Blue, there spreads
Another Heaven, The Boundless—no one yet
Hath reach'd it; there hereafter shall arise
The second Asgard, with another name.
Thither, when o'er this present Earth and Heavens
The tempest of the latter days hath swept,
And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,

Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair ;
Hoder and I shall join them from the grave.
There re-assembling we shall see emerge
From the bright Ocean at our feet an earth
More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits
Self-springing, and a seed of man preserv'd,
Who then shall live in peace, as now in war.
But we in Heaven shall find again with joy
The ruin'd palaces of Odin, seats
Familiar, halls where we have supp'd of old ;
Re-enter them with wonder, never fill
Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears.
And we shall tread once more the well-known plain
Of Ida, and among the grass shall find
The golden dice with which we play'd of yore ;
And that will bring to mind the former life
And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse
Of Odin, the delights of other days.
O Hermod, pray that thou may'st join us then !
Such for the future is my hope ; meanwhile,
I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure
Death, and the gloom which round me even now
Thickens, and to its inner gulf recalls.
Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd !"
He spoke, and wav'd farewell, and gave his hand

To Nanna; and she gave their brother blind
Her hand, in turn, for guidance; and The Three
Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon
Faded from sight into the interior gloom.
But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse,
Mute, gazing after them in tears; and fain,
Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,
Though they to Death were bound, and he to Heaven,
Then; but a Power he could not break withheld.
And as a stork which idle boys have trapp'd,
And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees
Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head
To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun;—
He strains to join their flight, and from his shed
Follows them with a long complaining cry—
So Hermod gaz'd, and yearn'd to join his kin.

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven.



TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

"In the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagil, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises.—The king of Ireland, at Tristram's solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter's confidante a philtre, or love-potion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers.—

"After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews.—Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall, on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands.—He married her—more out of gratitude than love.—Afterwards he proceeded to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.

"Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long-neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he despatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwall, to try if he could induce her to accompany him to Brittany, etc."—DUNLOP'S *History of Fiction.*

I. TRISTRAM

TRISTRAM.

Is she not come? The messenger was sure.
Prop me upon the pillows once again—
Raise me, my Page! this cannot long endure.
—Christ! what a night! how the sleet whips the pane!
What lights will those out to the northward be?

THE PAGE.

The lanterns of the fishing-boats at sea.

TRISTRAM.

Soft—who is that stands by the dying fire?

THE PAGE.

Iseult.

TRISTRAM.

Ah! not the Iseult I desire.

. . . . . .

What knight is this, so weak and pale,
Though the locks are yet brown on his noble head,
Propt on pillows in his bed,
Gazing seaward for the light
Of some ship that fights the gale
On this wild December night?

Over the sick man's feet is spread
A dark green forest-dress;
A gold harp leans against the bed,
Ruddy in the fire's light.
I know him by his harp of gold,
Famous in Arthur's court of old;
I know him by his forest-dress—
The peerless hunter, harper, knight,
Tristram of Lyoness.

What lady is this, whose silk attire
Gleams so rich in the light of the fire?
The ringlets on her shoulders lying
In their flitting lustre vying
With the clasp of burnish'd gold
Which her heavy robe doth hold.
Her looks are mild, her fingers slight
As the driven snow are white;
And her cheeks are sunk and pale.
Is it that the bleak sea-gale
Beating from the Atlantic sea
On this coast of Brittany,
Nips too keenly the sweet Flower?
Is it that a deep fatigue
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,
Passing all her youthful hour
Spinning with her maidens here,
Listlessly through the window-bars
Gazing seawards many a league,
From her lonely shore-built tower,
While the knights are at the wars?

Or, perhaps, has her young heart
Felt already some deeper smart,
Of those that in secret the heart-strings rive,
Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair?
Who is this snowdrop by the sea?—
I know her by her mildness rare,
Her snow-white hands, her golden hair;
I know her by her rich silk dress,
And her fragile loveliness—
The sweetest Christian soul alive,
Iseult of Brittany.

Iseult of Brittany?—but where
Is that other Iseult fair,
That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen?
She, whom Tristram's ship of yore
To Tyntagil from Ireland bore,
To Cornwall's palace, to the side
Of King Marc, to be his bride?
She who, as they voyaged, quaff'd
With Tristram that spic'd magic draught,
Which since then for ever rolls
Through their blood, and binds their souls,
Working love, but working teen?—
There were two Iseults who did sway
Each her hour of Tristram's day;
But one possess'd his waning time, The other his resplendent prime.
Behold her here, the patient Flower,
Who possess'd his darker hour!

Iseult of the Snow-White Hand
Watches pale by Tristram's bed.
She is here who had his gloom,
Where art thou who hadst his bloom?
One such kiss as those of yore
Might thy dying knight restore!
Does the love-draught work no more?
Art thou cold, or false, or dead,
Iseult of Ireland?

. . . . . .

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the rain,
And the knight sinks back on his pillows again:
He is weak with fever and pain,
And his spirit is not clear.
Hark! he mutters in his sleep,
As he wanders far from here,
Changes place and time of year,
And his closéd eye doth sweep
O'er some fair unwintry sea,
Not this fierce Atlantic deep,
As he mutters brokenly:—

TRISTRAM.

The calm sea shines, loose hang the vessel's sails;
Before us are the sweet green fields of Wales,
And overhead the cloudless sky of May.—

"Ah, would I were in those green fields
at play,
Not pent on ship-board this delicious day!
Tristram, I pray thee, of thy courtesy,
Reach me my golden cup that stands by
thee,
And pledge me in it first for courtesy.—"
Ha! dost thou start? are thy lips blanch'd
like mine?
Child, 'tis no water this, 'tis poison'd wine!
Iseult! . . .

. . . . . .

Ah, sweet angels, let him dream!
Keep his eyelids! let him seem
Not this fever-wasted wight
Thinn'd and paled before his time,
But the brilliant youthful knight
In the glory of his prime,
Sitting in the gilded barge,
At thy side, thou lovely charge,
Bending gaily o'er thy hand,
Iseult of Ireland!
And she too, that princess fair,
If her bloom be now less rare,
Let her have her youth again—
Let her be as she was then!
Let her have her proud dark eyes,
And her petulant quick replies,
Let her sweep her dazzling hand
With its gesture of command,
And shake back her raven hair

With the old imperious air!
As of old, so let her be,
That first Iseult, princess bright,
Chatting with her youthful knight
As he steers her o'er the sea,
Quitting at her father's will
The green isle where she was bred,
And her bower in Ireland,
For the surge-beat Cornish strand,
Where the prince whom she must wed
Keeps his court in Tyntagil,
Fast beside the sounding sea.
And that golden cup her mother
Gave her, that her future lord,
Gave her, that King Marc and she
Might drink it on their marriage-day,
And for ever love each other,—
Let her, as she sits on board,
Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly!
See it shine, and take it up,
And to Tristram laughing say—
"Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy,
Pledge me in my golden cup!"
Let them drink it—let their hands
Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,
As they feel the fatal bands
Of a love they dare not name,
With a wild delicious pain,
Twine about their hearts again!
Let the early summer be
Once more round them and the sea

Blue, and o'er its mirror kind
Let the breath of the May-wind,
Wandering through their drooping sails,
Die on the green fields of Wales!
Let a dream like this restore
What his eye must see no more!

TRISTRAM.

Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce-walks are drear.
Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me here?
Were feet like those made for so wild a way?
The southern winter-parlour, by my fay,
Had been the likeliest trysting-place to-day!
"*Tristram!—nay, nay—thou must not take my hand!*
Tristram!—sweet love!—we are betray'd—out-plann'd.
Fly—save thyself—save me!—I dare not stay."—
One last kiss first!—"*'Tis vain—to horse—away!*"

. . . . . .

Ah, sweet saints, his dream doth move
Faster surely than it should,
From the fever in his blood!
All the spring-time of his love
Is already gone and past,

And instead thereof is seen
Its winter, which endureth still—
The palace towers of Tyntagil,
The pleasaunce-walks, the weeping queen,
The flying leaves, the straining blast,
And that long, wild kiss—their last.
And this rough December-night,
And his burning fever-pain,
Mingle with his hurrying dream,
Till they rule it, till he seem
The press'd fugitive again,
The love-desperate banish'd knight
With a fire in his brain
Flying o'er the stormy main.
—Whither does he wander now?
Haply in his dreams the wind
Wafts him here, and lets him find
The lovely Orphan Child again
In her castle by the coast;
The youngest, fairest chatelaine,
That this realm of France can boast,
Our Snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,
Iseult of Brittany.
And—for through the haggard air,
The stain'd arms, the matted hair
Of that stranger-knight ill-starr'd,
There gleam'd something that recall'd
The Tristram who in better days
Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard—
Welcom'd here, and here install'd,
Tended of his fever here,

Haply he seems again to move
His young guardian's heart with love:
In his exil'd loneliness,
In his stately, deep distress,
Without a word, without a tear.—
Ah, 'tis well he should retrace
His tranquil life in this lone place;
His gentle bearing at the side
Of his timid youthful bride;
His long rambles by the shore
On winter-evenings, when the roar
Of the near waves came, sadly grand,
Through the dark, up the drown'd sand:
Or his endless reveries
In the woods, where the gleams play
On the grass under the trees,
Passing the long summer's day
Idle as a mossy stone
In the forest-depths alone;
The chase neglected, and his hound
Couch'd beside him on the ground.—
Ah, what trouble's on his brow?
Hither let him wander now,
Hither, to the quiet hours
Pass'd among these heaths of ours
By the gray Atlantic sea;
Hours, if not of ecstacy,
From violent anguish surely free!

TRISTRAM.

All red with blood the whirling river flows,
The wide plain rings, the dazed air throbs
with blows.
Upon us are the chivalry of Rome—
Their spears are down, their steeds are
bathed in foam.
"Up, Tristram, up," men cry, "thou
moonstruck knight!
What foul fiend rides thee? On into the
fight!"—
Above the din her voice is in my ears;
I see her form glide through the crossing
spears.—
Iseult! . . .
. . . . . .
Ah! he wanders forth again;
We cannot keep him; now, as then,
There's a secret in his breast
That will never let him rest.
These musing fits in the green wood
They cloud the brain, they dull the blood.
His sword is sharp, his horse is good;
Beyond the mountains will he see
The famous towns of Italy,
And label with the blessed sign
The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.
At Arthur's side he fights once more
With the Roman Emperor.
There's many a gay knight where he goes

Will help him to forget his care;
The march—the leaguer—Heaven's blithe
air,
The neighing steeds, the ringing blows;—
Sick pining comes not where these are.
Ah! what boots it, that the jest
Lightens every other brow,
What, that every other breast
Dances as the trumpets blow,
If one's own heart beats not light
On the waves of the toss'd fight,
If oneself cannot get free
From the clog of misery?
Thy lovely youthful Wife grows pale
Watching by the salt sea-tide
With her children at her side
For the gleam of thy white sail.
Home, Tristram, to thy halls again!
To our lonely sea complain,
To our forests tell thy pain!

TRISTRAM.

All round the forest sweeps off, black in
shade,
But it is moonlight in the open glade:
And in the bottom of the glade shine clear
The forest-chapel and the fountain near.
I think, I have a fever in my blood:
Come, let me leave the shadow of this wood,

Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the flood.
Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's clear light;
God! 'tis *her* face plays in the waters bright.—
"Fair love," she says, "canst thou forget so soon,
At this soft hour, under this sweet moon?"
Iseult! . . .

. . . . . .

Ah, poor soul! if this be so,
Only death can balm thy woe.
The solitudes of the green wood
Had no medicine for thy mood.
The rushing battle clear'd thy blood
As little as did solitude.
—Ah! his eyelids slowly break
Their hot seals, and let him wake.
What new change shall we now see?
A happier? Worse it cannot be.

TRISTRAM.

Is my Page here? Come, turn me to the fire!
Upon the window-panes the moon shines bright;
The wind is down: but she'll not come to-night.
Ah no!—She is asleep in Tyntagil,

Far hence; her dreams are fair—her sleep
is still.
Of me she recks not, nor of my desire.
—I have had dreams, I have had dreams,
my Page,
Would take a score years from a strong
man's age;
And with a blood like mine, will leave, I
fear,
Scant leisure for a second messenger.
—My princess, art thou there? Sweet, 'tis
too late!
To bed, and sleep! my fever is gone by:
To-night my Page shall keep me company.
Where do the children sleep? kiss them
for me!
Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I;
This comes of nursing long and watching
late.
To bed—good-night!

. . . . .

She left the gleam-lit fireplace,
She came to the bed-side.
She took his hands in hers: her tears
Down on her slender fingers rain'd.
She rais'd her eyes upon his face—
Not with a look of wounded pride,
A look as if the heart complain'd—
Her look was like a sad embrace;
The gaze of one who can divine
A grief, and sympathise.

Sweet Flower! thy children's eyes
Are not more innocent than thine.
But they sleep in shelter'd rest,
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,
On the Castle's southern side;
Where feebly comes the mournful roar
Of buffeting wind and surging tide
Through many a room and corridor.
—Full on their window the Moon's ray
Makes their chamber as bright as day.
It shines upon the blank white walls
And on the snowy pillow falls,
And on two angel-heads doth play
Turn'd to each other—the eyes closed,
The lashes on the cheeks repos'd.
Round each sweet brow the cap close-set
Hardly lets peep the golden hair;
Through the soft-open'd lips the air
Scarcely moves the coverlet.
One little wandering arm is thrown
At random on the counterpane,
And often the fingers close in haste
As if their baby owner chased
The butterflies again.
This stir they have, and this alone;
But else they are so still!
Ah, tired madcaps! you lie still;
But were you at the window now,
To look forth on the fairy sight
Of your illumin'd haunts by night;
To see the park-glades where you play

Far lovelier than they are by day;
To see the sparkle on the eaves,
And upon every giant bough
Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves
Are jewell'd with bright drops of rain—
How would your voices run again!
And far beyond the sparkling trees
Of the castle-park one sees
The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,
Moor behind moor, far, far away,
Into the heart of Brittany.
And here and there, lock'd by the land,
Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,
And many a stretch of watery sand
All shining in the white moonbeams—
But you see fairer in your dreams!

What voices are these on the clear night-air?
What lights in the court? what steps on the stair?

2. ISEULT OF IRELAND.

TRISTRAM.

RAISE the light, my page, that I may see her.—
Thou art come at last, then, haughty Queen!
Long I've waited, long I've fought my fever:
Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

ISEULT.

Blame me not, poor sufferer, that I tarried:
I was bound, I could not break the band.
Chide not with the past, but feel the present:
I am here—we meet—I hold thy hand.

TRISTRAM.

Thou art come, indeed—thou hast rejoin'd me;
Thou hast dar'd it: but too late to save.
Fear not now that men should tax thy honour!
I am dying: build—(thou may'st)—my grave!

ISEULT.

Tristram, for the love of Heaven, speak kindly!
What, I hear these bitter words from thee?
Sick with grief I am, and faint with travel—
Take my hand—dear Tristram, look on me!

TRISTRAM.

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage—
Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.
But thy dark eyes are not dimm'd, proud Iseult!
And thy beauty never was more fair.

ISEULT.

Ah, harsh flatterer! let alone my beauty!
I, like thee, have left my youth afar.
Take my hand, and touch these wasted fingers—
See my cheek and lips, how white they are!

TRISTRAM.

Thou art paler:—but thy sweet charm, Iseult!
Would not fade with the dull years away.
Ah, how fair thou standest in the moonlight!
I forgive thee, Iseult!—thou wilt stay?

ISEULT.

Fear me not, I will be always with thee;
I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy pain;
Sing thee tales of true long-parted lovers,
Join'd at evening of their days again.

TRISTRAM.

No, thou shalt not speak; I should be finding
Something alter'd in thy courtly tone.
Sit—sit by me: I will think, we've liv'd so
In the greenwood, all our lives, alone.

ISEULT.

Alter'd, Tristram? Not in courts, believe me,
Love like mine is alter'd in the breast.
Courtly life is light and cannot reach it.
Ah, it lives, because so deep suppress'd.

Royal state with Marc, my deep-wrong'd husband—
That was bliss to make my sorrows flee!
Silken courtiers whispering honied nothings—
Those were friends to make me false to thee!

What, thou think'st men speak in courtly chambers
Words by which the wretched are consol'd?
What, thou think'st this aching brow was cooler,
Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold?

Ah, on which, if both our lots were balanc'd,
Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown—
Thee, a weeping exile in thy forest,
Me, a smiling queen upon my throne?

Vain and strange debate, where both have suffer'd;
Both have pass'd a youth constrain'd and sad;

Both have brought their anxious day to
evening,
And have now short space for being glad.

Join'd we are henceforth: nor will thy
people,
Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill
That an ancient rival shares her office,
When she sees her humbled, pale, and
still.

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,
I, a statue on thy chapel-floor,
Pour'd in grief before the Virgin-Mother,
Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry—"Is this the foe I dreaded?
This his idol? this that royal bride?
Ah, an hour of health would purge his
eyesight!
Stay, pale queen! for ever by my side."

Hush, no words! that smile, I see, forgives
me.
I am now thy nurse, I bid thee sleep.
Close thine eyes—this flooding moonlight
blinds them!—
Nay, all's well again: thou must not
weep.

TRISTRAM.

I am happy: yet I feel, there's something
Swells my heart, and takes my breath away:
Through a mist I see thee: near!—come nearer!
Bend—bend down—I yet have much to say.

ISEULT.

Heaven! his head sinks back upon the pillow!—
Tristram! Tristram! let thy heart not fail!
Call on God and on the holy angels!
What, love, courage!—Christ! he is so pale.

TRISTRAM.

Hush, 'tis vain, I feel my end approaching!
This is what my mother said should be,
When the fierce pains took her in the forest,
The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.

"Son," she said, "thy name shall be of sorrow!
Tristram art thou call'd for my death's sake!"
So she said, and died in the drear forest.
Grief since then his home with me doth make.

I am dying.—Start not, nor look wildly!
Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save.
But, since living we were ununited,
Go not far, O Iseult! from my grave.

Rise, go hence, and seek the princess Iseult:
Speak her fair, she is of royal blood.
Say, I charg'd her, that ye live together:—
She will grant it—she is kind and good.

Now to sail the seas of Death and leave thee;
One last kiss upon the living shore!

ISEULT.

Tristram! — Tristram! — stay — receive me with thee!
Iseult leaves thee, Tristram! never more.

. . . . . .

You see them clear: the moon shines bright.
Slow—slow and softly, where she stood,
She sinks upon the ground: her hood
Had fallen back: her arms outspread
Still hold her lover's hands: her head
Is bow'd, half-buried, on the bed.
O'er the blanch'd sheet her raven hair
Lies in disorder'd streams; and there,
Strung like white stars, the pearls still are,
And the golden bracelets, heavy and rare,

Flash on her white arms still.
The very same which yesternight
Flash'd in the silver sconces' light,
When the feast was loud and the laughter shrill
In the banquet-hall of Tyntagil.
But then they deck'd a restless ghost
With hot-flush'd cheeks and brilliant eyes,
And quivering lips on which the tide
Of courtly speech abruptly died,
And a glance that over the crowded floor,
The dancers, and the festive host,
Flew ever to the door.
That the knights eyed her in surprise,
And the dames whisper'd scoffingly—
"Her moods good lack, they pass like showers!
But yesternight and she would be
As pale and still as wither'd flowers,
And now to-night she laughs and speaks
And has a colour in her cheeks.
Heaven keep us from such fantasy!—

The air of the December-night
Steals coldly around the chamber bright,
Where those lifeless lovers be;
Swinging with it, in the light
Flaps the ghostlike tapestry.
And on the arras wrought you see
A stately Huntsman, clad in green,
And round him a fresh forest-scene.

On that clear forest-knoll he stays,
With his pack round him, and delays.
He stares and stares, with troubled face,
At this huge, gleam-lit fireplace,
At the bright, iron-figur'd door,
And those blown rushes on the floor.
He gazes down into the room
With heated cheeks and flurried air,
And to himself he seems to say—
"*What place is this, and who are they?*
Who is that kneeling Lady fair?
And on his pillows that pale Knight
Who seems of marble on a tomb?
How comes it here, this chamber bright,
Through whose mullion'd windows clear
The castle-court all wet with rain,
The drawbridge and the moat appear,
And then the beach, and, mark'd with spray,
The sunken reefs, and far away
The unquiet bright Atlantic plain?
—What, has some glamour made me sleep,
And sent me with my dogs to sweep,
By night, with boisterous bugle-peal,
Through some old, sea-side, knightly hall
Not in the free greenwood at all?
That Knight's asleep, and at her prayer
That Lady by the bed doth kneel:
Then hush, thou boisterous bugle-peal!"
The wild boar rustles in his lair—
The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air—
But lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,
O Hunter! and without a fear
Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,
And through the glades thy pastime take—
For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here!
For these thou seest are unmoved;
Cold, cold as those who liv'd and lov'd
A thousand years ago.

3. ISEULT OF BRITTANY

A YEAR had flown, and o'er the sea away,
In Cornwall, Tristram and Queen Iseult lay;
At Tyntagil, in King Marc's chapel old—
There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.

The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,
Had wander'd forth: her children were at play
In a green circular hollow in the heath
Which borders the sea-shore; a country path
Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.
The hollow's grassy banks are soft inclined,
And to one standing on them, far and near
The lone unbroken view spreads bright and clear
Over the waste:—This cirque of open ground
Is light and green; the heather, which all round

Creeps thickly, grows not here; but the pale grass
Is strewn with rocks, and many a shiver'd mass
Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here and there
Dotted with holly trees and juniper.
In the smooth centre of the opening stood
Three hollies side by side, and made a screen
Warm with the winter sun, of burnish'd green,
With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's food.
Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands,
Watching her children play: their little hands
Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and streams
Of stagshorn for their hats: anon, with screams
Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and bound
Among the holly clumps and broken ground,
Racing full speed, and startling in their rush
The fell-fares and the speckled missel-thrush
Out of their glossy coverts: but when now
Their cheeks were flush'd, and over each hot brow,
Under the feather'd hats of the sweet pair,
In blinding masses shower'd the golden hair—

Then Iseult call'd them to her, and the three
Cluster'd under the holly-screen, and she
Told them an old-world Breton history.

Warm in their mantles wrapt the three stood there,
Under the hollies, in the clear still air—
Mantles with those rich furs deep glistering
Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.
Long they staid still—then, pacing at their ease,
Mov'd up and down under the glossy trees;
But still as they pursued their warm dry road
From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd,
And still the children listen'd, their blue eyes
Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise;
Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side,
Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide,
Nor to the snow which, though 'twas all away
From the open heath, still by the hedgerows lay,
Nor to the shining sea-fowl that with screams
Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams,
Swooping to landward; nor to where, quite clear,
The fell-fares settled on the thickets near.

And they would still have listen'd, till dark night
Came keen and chill down on the heather bright;
But, when the red glow on the sea grew cold,
And the grey turrets of the castle old
Look'd sternly through the frosty evening air,—
Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair,
And brought her tale to an end, and found the path,
And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy? Does she see unmoved
The days in which she might have liv'd and lov'd
Slip without bringing bliss slowly away,
One after one, to-morrow like to-day?
Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will:—
Is it this thought that makes her mien so still,
Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet
Her children's? She moves slow: her voice alone
Has yet an infantine and silver tone,

But even that comes languidly: in truth,
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.
And now she will go home, and softly lay
Her laughing children in their beds, and play
Awhile with them before they sleep; and then
She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen
Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar,
Along this iron coast, know like a star,
And take her broidery-frame, and there she'll sit
Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it;
Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind
Her children, or to listen to the wind.
And when the clock peals midnight, she will move
Her work away, and let her fingers rove
Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound
Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground:
Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes
Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap; then rise,
And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told
Her rosary beads of ebony tipp'd with gold,
Then to her soft sleep: and to-morrow 'll be
To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall.
The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal,
Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound,
Are there the sole companions to be found.
But these she loves; and noisier life than this
She would find ill to bear, weak as she is:
She has her children, too, and night and day
Is with them; and the wide heaths where they play,
The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore,
The sand, the sea-birds, and the distant sails,
These are to her dear as to them: the tales
With which this day the children she beguil'd
She glean'd from Breton grandames, when a child
In every hut along this sea-coast wild.
She herself loves them still, and, when they are told,
Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

What tale did Iseult to the children say,
Under the hollies, that bright winter's day?

She told them of the fairy-haunted land
Away the other side of Brittany,
Beyond the heaths, edg'd by the lonely sea;
Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,
Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps,

Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree
sleeps.
For here he came with the fay Vivian,
One April, when the warm days first began;
He was on foot, and that false fay, his friend,
On her white palfrey: here he met his
end,
In these lone sylvan glades, that April
day.
This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay
Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought
clear
Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems, the forest air
Had loosen'd the brown curls of Vivian's
hair,
Which play'd on her flush'd cheek, and her
blue eyes
Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise.
Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bathed
in sweat,
For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd
yet.
A briar in that tangled wilderness
Had scored her white right hand, which she
allows
To rest ungloved on her green riding-dress;
The other warded off the drooping boughs.
But still she chatted on, with her blue eyes
Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately prize:

Her 'haviour had the morning's fresh clear
grace,
The spirit of the woods was in her face;
She look'd so witching fair, that learned
wight
Forgot his craft, and his best wits took
flight,
And he grew fond, and eager to obey
His mistress, use her empire as she may.

They came to where the brush-wood ceased,
and day
Peer'd 'twixt the stems; and the ground
broke away
In a slop'd sward down to a brawling brook,
And up as high as where they stood to look
On the brook's further side was clear; but
then
The underwood and trees began again.
This open glen was studded thick with thorns
Then white with blossom; and you saw the
horns,
Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-
deer
Which come at noon down to the water here.
You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart along
Under the thorns on the green sward; and
strong
The blackbird whistled from the dingles
near,
And the light chipping of the woodpecker

Rang lonelily and sharp : the sky was fair,
And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd everywhere.
Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's brow,
To gaze on the green sea of leaf and bough
Which glistering lay all round them, lone and mild,
As if to itself the quiet forest smil'd.
Upon the brow-top grew a thorn ; and here
The grass was dry and moss'd, and you saw clear
Across the hollow : white anemones
Starr'd the cool turf, and clumps of primroses
Ran out from the dark underwood behind.
No fairer resting-place a man could find.
"Here let us halt," said Merlin then ; and she
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a sleep
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,
And from her brown-lock'd head the wimple throws,
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over
The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping lover.

Nine times she waved the fluttering wimple
round,
And made a little plot of magic ground.
And in that daisied circle, as men say,
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day,
But she herself whither she will can rove—
For she was passing weary of his love.

SAINT BRANDAN

Saint Brandan sails the Northern Main:
The brotherhoods of saints are glad.
He greets them once, he sails again:
So late!—such storms!—The Saint is mad!

He heard across the howling seas
Chime convent-bells on wintry nights;
He saw on spray-swept Hebrides
Twinkle the monastery-lights;

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steer'd:
And now no bells, no convents more!
The hurtling Polar lights are near'd;
The sea without a human shore.

At last—(it was the Christmas night;
Stars shone after a day of storm)—
He sees float past an iceberg white,
And on it—Christ!—a living form!

That furtive mien—that scowling eye—
Of hair that red and tufted fell——
It is—Oh, where shall Brandan fly?—
The traitor Judas, out of Hell!

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate;
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.

He hears a voice sigh humbly, "Wait!
By high permission I am here.

"One moment wait, thou holy man!
On earth my crime, my death, they knew:
My name is under all men's ban:
Ah, tell them of my respite too!

"Tell them, one blessed Christmas night—
(It was the first after I came,
Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
To rue my guilt in endless flame)—

"I felt, as I in torment lay
'Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,
An angel touch mine arm, and say—
Go hence and cool thyself an hour!

"'Ah, whence this mercy, Lord?' I said.
The Leper recollect, said he,
Who ask'd the passers-by for aid,
In Joppa, and thy charity.

"Then I remember'd how I went,
In Joppa, through the public street,
One morn, when the sirocco spent
Its storms of dust, with burning heat;

"And in the street a Leper sate,
Shivering with fever, naked, old:

Sand raked his sores from heel to pate;
The hot wind fever'd him five-fold.

"He gaz'd upon me as I pass'd,
And murmur'd, *Help me, or I die!*
To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,
Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

"O Brandan! Think, what grace divine,
What blessing must true goodness shower,
If semblance of it faint, like mine,
Hath such inestimable power!

"Well-fed, well-clothed, well-friended, I
Did that chance act of good, that one;
Then went my way to kill and lie—
Forgot my good as soon as done.

"That germ of kindness, in the womb
Of Mercy caught, did not expire:
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,
And friends me in the pit of fire.

"Once every year, when carols wake,
On earth, the Christmas night's repose,
Arising from the sinners' lake,
I journey to these healing snows.

"I stanch with ice my burning breast,
With silence balm my whirling brain.

O Brandan ! to this hour of rest,
That Joppan leper's ease was pain ! "——

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes :
He bow'd his head ; he breath'd a prayer.
When he look'd up—tenantless lies
The iceberg, in the frosty air !

THE NECKAN

In summer, on the headlands,
The Baltic Sea along,
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
And sings his plaintive song.

Green rolls beneath the headlands,
Green rolls the Baltic Sea.
And there, below the Neckan's feet,
His wife and children be.

He sings not of the ocean,
Its shells and roses pale.
Of earth, of earth the Neckan sings;
He hath no other tale.

He sits upon the headlands,
And sings a mournful stave
Of all he saw and felt on earth,
Far from the green sea wave.

Sings how, a knight, he wander'd
By castle, field, and town.—
But earthly knights have harder hearts
Than the Sea Children own.

Sings of his earthly bridal—
  Priest, knights, and ladies gay.
"And who art thou," the priest began,
  "Sir Knight, who wedd'st to-day?"—

"I am no knight," he answer'd;
  "From the sea waves I come."—
The knights drew sword, the ladies scream'd,
  The surplic'd priest stood dumb.

He sings how from the chapel
  He vanish'd with his bride,
And bore her down to the sea halls,
  Beneath the cold sea tide.

He sings how she sits weeping
  'Mid shells that round her lie.
"False Neckan shares my bed," she weeps;
  "No Christian mate have I."—

He sings how through the billows
  He rose to earth again,
And sought a priest to sign the cross,
  That Neckan Heaven might gain.

He sings how, on an evening,
  Beneath the birch trees cool,
He sate and play'd his harp of gold,
  Beside the river pool.

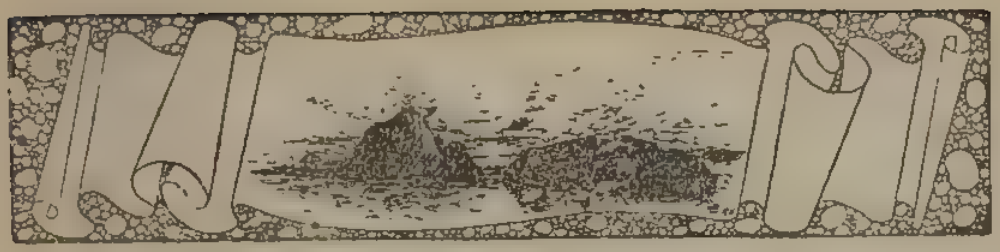
Beside the pool sate Neckan—
  Tears fill'd his cold blue eye.
On his white mule, across the bridge,
  A cassock'd priest rode by.

THE NECKAN

"Why sitt'st thou there, O Neckan,
And play'st thy harp of gold?
Sooner shall this my staff bear leaves,
Than thou shalt Heaven behold."—

The cassock'd priest rode onwards,
And vanish'd with his mule.
And Neckan in the twilight gray
Wept by the river pool.

In summer, on the headlands,
The Baltic Sea along,
Sits Neckan with his harp of gold,
And sings this plaintive song.



THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

COME, dear children, let us away;
Down and away below.
Now my brothers call from the bay;
Now the great winds shorewards blow
Now the salt tides seawards flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away.
This way, this way.

Call her once before you go.
Call once yet.
In a voice that she will know:
"Margaret! Margaret!"
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear:
Children's voices, wild with pain.
Surely she will come again.
Call her once and come away.
This way, this way.
"Mother dear, we cannot stay."
The wild white horses foam and fret.
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down.
Call no more.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

One last look at the white-wall'd town,
And the little grey church on the windy shore.
Then come down.
She will not come though you call all day
Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam;
Where the salt weed sways in the stream;
Where the sea-beasts ranged all round
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye?
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.

The Forsaken Merman.

Call once yet,
In a voice that she will know:
Margaret! Margaret!"

She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended
it well,
When down swung the sound of the far-off
bell.
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear
green sea.
She said: "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here with
thee."
I said: "Go up, dear heart, through the
waves;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind
sea-caves."
She smiled, she went up through the surf in
the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
"The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.
Long prayers," I said, "in the world they
say.
Come," I said, and we rose through the surf
in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-
wall'd town.
Through the narrow pav'd streets, where all
was still,
To the little grey church on the windy hill.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

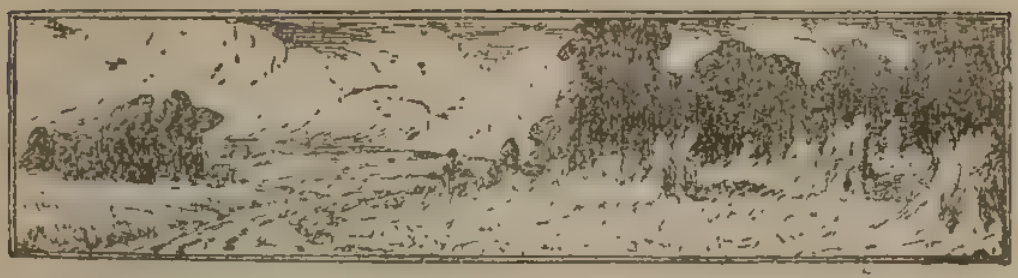
From the church came a murmur of folk at
their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing
airs.
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones,
worn with rains,
And we gaz'd up the aisle through the small
leaded panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here.
Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone;
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."
But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book.
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more.
Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down.
Down to the depths of the sea.
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings: "O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with
its toy.
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy
well.
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun."
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,

Till the shuttle falls from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at
the sand;
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh.
For the cold strange eyes of a little
Mermaiden,
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children.
Come children, come down.
The hoarse wind blows colder;
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing: "Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she.
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow :
When clear falls the moonlight ;
When spring-tides are low ;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starr'd with broom ;
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanch'd sands a gloom ;
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie ;
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town ;
At the church on the hillside—
And then come back down.
Singing: "There dwells a lov'd one,
But cruel is she.
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea."



PARTING

YE storm-winds of Autumn
Who rush by, who shake
The window, and ruffle
The gleam-lighted lake;
Who cross to the hill-side
Thin-sprinkled with farms,
Where the high woods strip sadly
Their yellowing arms;—
Ye are bound for the mountains—
Ah, with you let me go
Where your cold distant barrier,
The vast range of snow,
Through the loose clouds lifts dimly
Its white peaks in air—
How deep is their stillness!
Ah! would I were there!

But on the stairs what voice is this I hear,
Buoyant as morning, and as morning clear?
Say, has some wet bird-haunted English lawn
Lent it the music of its trees at dawn?

Or was it from some sun-fleck'd mountain
brook
That the sweet voice its upland clearness
took?
Ah! it comes nearer—
Sweet notes, this way!

Hark! fast by the window
The rushing winds go,
To the ice-cumber'd gorges,
The vast seas of snow.
There the torrents drive upward
Their rock-strangled hum,
There the avalanche thunders
The hoarse torrent dumb.
—I come, O ye mountains!
Ye torrents, I come!

But who is this, by the half-open'd door,
Whose figure casts a shadow on the floor?
The sweet blue eyes—the soft, ash-colour'd
hair—
The cheeks that still their gentle paleness
wear—
The lovely lips, with their arch smile, that
tells
The unconquer'd joy in which her spirit
dwells—
Ah! they bend nearer—
Sweet lips, this way!

PARTING

Hark! the wind rushes past us—
Ah! with that let me go
To the clear waning hill-side
Unspotted by snow,
There to watch, o'er the sunk vale,
The frore mountain wall,
Where the nich'd snow-bed sprays down
Its powdery fall.
There its dusky blue clusters
The aconite spreads;
There the pines slope, the cloud-strips
Hung soft in their heads.
No life but, at moments,
The mountain-bee's hum.
—I come, O ye mountains!
Ye pine-woods, I come!

Forgive me! forgive me!
Ah, Marguerite, fain
Would these arms reach to clasp thee:—
But see! 'tis in vain.

In the void air towards thee
My strain'd arms are cast.
But a sea rolls between us—
Our different past.

To the lips, ah! of others,
Those lips have been prest,
And others, ere I was,
Were clasp'd to that breast;

PARTING

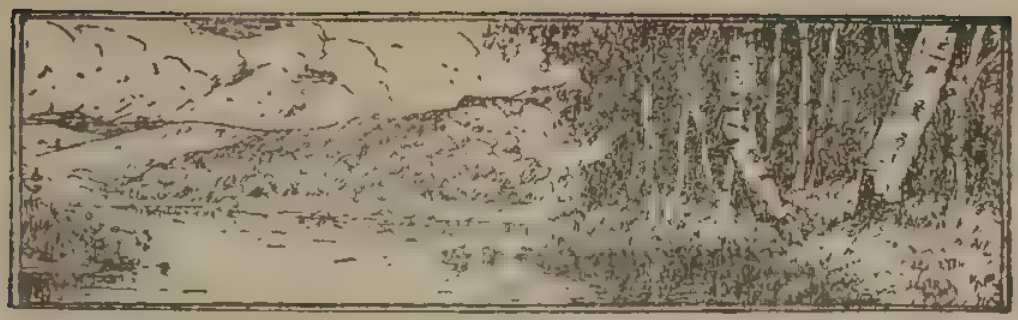
Far, far from each other
  Our spirits have grown.
And what heart knows another?
  Ah! who knows his own?

Blow, ye winds! lift me with you!
  I come to the wild.
Fold closely, O Nature!
  Thine arms round thy child.

To thee only God granted
  A heart ever new:
To all always open;
  To all always true.

Ah, calm me! restore me!
  And dry up my tears
On thy high mountain platforms,
  Where Morn first appears,

Where the white mists, for ever,
  Are spread and upfurl'd;
In the stir of the forces
  Whence issued the world.



A FAREWELL

My horse's feet beside the lake,
Where sweet the unbroken moon-
beams lay,
Sent echoes through the night to wake
Each glistening strand, each heath-fring'd bay.

The poplar avenue was pass'd,
And the roof'd bridge that spans the stream.
Up the steep street I hurried fast,
Led by thy taper's starlike beam.

I came; I saw thee rise:—the blood
Came flushing to thy languid cheek.
Lock'd in each other's arms we stood,
In tears, with hearts too full to speak.

Days flew: ah, soon I could discern
A trouble in thine alter'd air.
Thy hand lay languidly in mine—
Thy cheek was grave, thy speech grew rare.

A FAREWELL

I blame thee not:—this heart, I know,
To be long lov'd was never fram'd;
For something in its depths doth glow
Too strange, too restless, too untam'd.

And women—things that live and move
Min'd by the fever of the soul—
They seek to find in those they love
Stern strength, and promise of controul.

They ask not kindness, gentle ways;
These they themselves have tried and known:
They ask a soul that never sways
With the blind gusts which shake their own.

I too have felt the load I bore
In a too strong emotion's sway;
I too have wish'd, no woman more,
This starting, feverish heart, away:

I too have long'd for trenchant force
And will like a dividing spear;
Have prais'd the keen, unscrupulous course,
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.

But in the world I learnt, what there
Thou too wilt surely one day prove,
That will, that energy, though rare,
Are yet far, far less rare than love.

A FAREWELL

Go then! till Time and Fate impress
This truth on thee, be mine no more!
They will: for thou, I feel, no less
Than I, wert destin'd to this lore.

We school our manners, act our parts:
But He, who sees us through and through,
Knows that the bent of both our hearts
Was to be gentle, tranquil, true.

And though we wear out life, alas,
Distracted as a homeless wind,
In beating where we must not pass,
In seeking what we shall not find;

Yet we shall one day gain, life past,
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole;
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
Our true affinities of soul.

We shall not then deny a course
To every thought the mass ignore;
We shall not then call hardness force,
Nor lightness wisdom any more.

Then, in the eternal Father's smile,
Our sooth'd, encourag'd souls will dare
To *seem* as free from pride and guile,
As good, as generous, as they *are*.

A FAREWELL

Then we shall know our friends: though much
Will have been lost—the help in strife;
The thousand sweet still joys of such
As hand in hand face earthly life;—

Though these be lost, there will be yet
A sympathy august and pure;
Ennobled by a vast regret,
And by contrition seal'd thrice sure.

And we, whose ways were unlike here,
May then more neighbouring courses ply;
May to each other be brought near
And greet across infinity.

How sweet, unreach'd by earthly jars,
My sister! to behold with thee
The hush among the shining stars,
The calm upon the moonlit sea.

How sweet to feel, on the boon air,
All our unquiet pulses cease;
To feel that nothing can impair
The gentleness, the thirst for peace—

The gentleness too rudely hurl'd
On this wild earth of hate and fear:
The thirst for peace a raving world
Would never let us satiate here.

ISOLATION

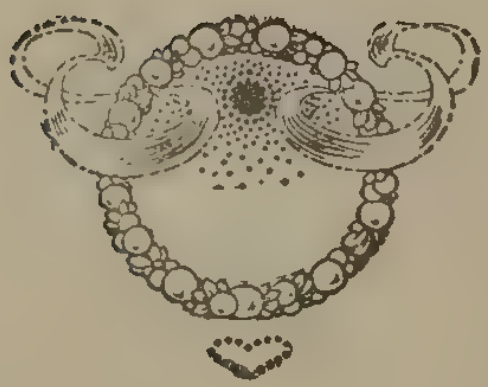
YES: in the sea of life enisl'd,
With echoing straits between thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour;

Oh then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent.
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

ISOLATION

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance rul'd;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.



TO MARGUERITE

We were apart: yet, day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be;
I bade it keep the world away,
And grow a home for only thee:
Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day more tried, more true.

The fault was grave; I might have known,
What far too soon, alas, I learn'd—
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith is often unreturn'd.—
Self-sway'd our feelings ebb and swell:
Thou lov'st no more: Farewell! Farewell!

Farewell! and thou, thou lonely heart,
Which never yet without remorse
Even for a moment did'st depart
From thy remote and sphered course
To haunt the place where passions reign,
Back to thy solitude again!

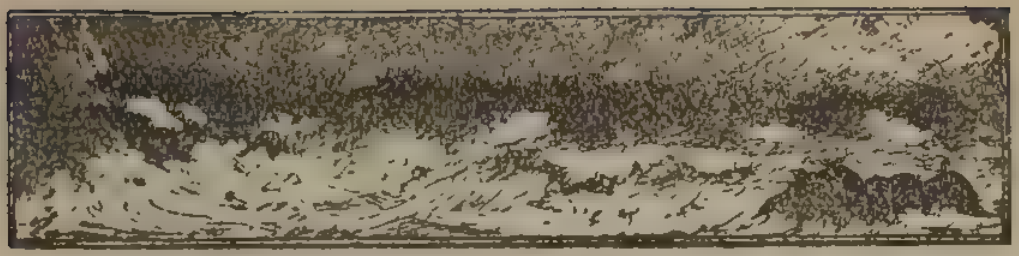
Back, with the conscious thrill of shame
Which Luna felt, that summer night,
Flash through her pure immortal frame,
When she forsook the starry height

To hang over Endymion's sleep
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep;—

Yet she, chaste Queen, had never prov'd
How vain a thing is mortal love,
Wandering in Heaven, far remov'd.
But thou hast long had place to prove
This truth—to prove, and make thine own—
Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.

Or, if not quite alone, yet they
Which touch thee are unmating things—
Ocean, and Clouds, and Night, and Day;
Lorn Autumns and triumphant Springs;
And life, and others' joy and pain,
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men—for they, at least,
Have *dream'd* two human hearts might blend
In one, and were through faith releas'd
From isolation without end
Prolong'd, nor knew, although not less
Alone than thou, their loneliness.



ABSENCE

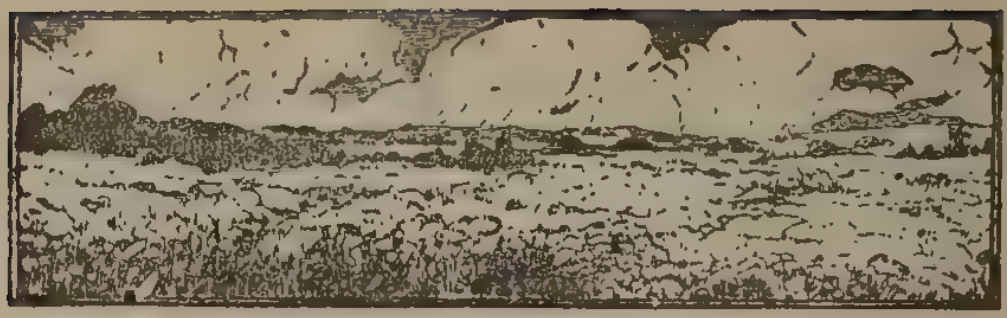
In this fair stranger's eyes of gray
Thine eyes, my love, I see.
I shudder: for the passing day
Had borne me far from thee.

This is the curse of life: that not
A nobler, calmer train
Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot
Our passions from our brain;

But each day brings its petty dust
Our soon-chok'd souls to fill,
And we forget because we must,
And not because we will.

I struggle towards the light; and ye,
Once-long'd-for storms of love!
If with the light ye cannot be,
I bear that ye remove.

I struggle towards the light; but oh,
While yet the night is chill,
Upon Time's barren, stormy flow,
Stay with me, Marguerite, still!



THE TERRACE AT BERNE

TEN years!—and to my waking eye
Once more the roofs of Berne appear;
The rocky banks, the terrace high,
The stream—and do I linger here?

The clouds are on the Oberland,
The Jungfrau snows look faint and far;
But bright are those green fields at hand,
And through those fields comes down the Aar,

And from the blue twin lakes it comes,
Flows by the town, the church-yard fair,
And 'neath the garden-walk it hums,
The house—and is my Marguerite there?

Ah, shall I see thee, while a flush
Of startled pleasure floods thy brow,
Quick through the oleanders brush,
And clap thy hands, and cry: *'Tis thou!*

Or hast thou long since wander'd back,
Daughter of France! to France, thy home

And flitted down the flowery track
Where feet like thine too lightly come?

Doth riotous laughter now replace
Thy smile, and rouge, with stony glare,
Thy cheek's soft hue; and fluttering lace
The kerchief that enwound thy hair?

Or is it over?—art thou dead?—
Dead?—and no warning shiver ran
Across my heart, to say thy thread
Of life was cut, and closed thy span!

Could from earth's ways that figure slight
Be lost, and I not feel 'twas so?
Of that fresh voice the gay delight
Fail from earth's air, and I not know?

Or shall I find thee still, but changed,
But not the Marguerite of thy prime?
With all thy being re-arranged,
Pass'd through the crucible of time;

With spirit vanish'd, beauty waned,
And hardly yet a glance, a tone,
A gesture—anything—retain'd
Of all that was my Marguerite's own?

I will not know!—for wherefore try,
To things by mortal course that live,
A shadowy durability,
For which they were not meant, to give?

Like driftwood spars which meet and pass
Upon the boundless ocean-plain,
So on the sea of life, alas!
Man nears man, meets, and leaves again.

I knew it when my life was young,
I feel it still, now youth is o'er!
The mists are on the mountains hung,
And Marguerite I shall see no more.

THE STRAYED REVELLER

The Portico of Circe's Palace. Evening.

A YOUTH. CIRCE.

THE YOUTH.

FASTER, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild, thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul.

Thou standest, smiling
Down on me; thy right arm
Lean'd up against the column there,
Props thy soft cheek;
Thy left holds, hanging loosely,
The deep cup, ivy-cinctured,
I held but now.

Is it then evening
So soon? I see, the night dews,
Cluster'd in thick beads, dim
The agate brooch-stones
On thy white shoulder.
The cool night-wind, too,

Blows through the portico,
Stirs thy hair, Goddess,
Waves thy white robe.

CIRCE.

Whence art thou, sleeper?

THE YOUTH.

When the white dawn first
Through the rough fir-planks
Of my hut, by the chestnuts,
Up at the valley-head,
Came breaking, Goddess,
I sprang up, I threw round me
My dappled fawn-skin:
Passing out, from the wet turf,
Where they lay, by the hut door,
I snatch'd up my vine-crown, my fir-staff
All drench'd in dew:
Came swift down to join
The rout early gather'd
In the town, round the temple,
Iacchus' white fane
On yonder hill.

Quick I pass'd, following
The wood-cutters' cart-track
Down the dark valley;—I saw
On my left, through the beeches,

Thy palace, Goddess,
Smokeless, empty :
Trembling, I enter'd ; beheld
The court all silent,
The lions sleeping ;
On the altar, this bowl.
I drank, Goddess—
And sunk down here, sleeping,
On the steps of thy portico.

CIRCE.

Foolish boy ! Why tremblest thou ?
Thou lovest it, then, my wine ?
Wouldst more of it ? See, how glows,
Through the delicate flush'd marble,
The red creaming liquor,
Strown with dark seeds !
Drink, then ! I chide thee not,
Deny thee not my bowl.
Come, stretch forth thy hand, then—so,—
Drink, drink again !

THE YOUTH.

Thanks, gracious One !
Ah, the sweet fumes again !
More soft, ah me !
More subtle-winding
Than Pan's flute-music.
Faint—faint ! Ah me !
Again the sweet sleep.

CIRCÈ.

Hist! Thou—within there!
Come forth, Ulysses!
Art tired with hunting?
While we range the wood-land,
See what the day brings.

ULYSSES.

Ever new magic!
Hast thou then lur'd hither,
Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,
The young, languid-ey'd Ampelus,
Iacchus' darling—
Or some youth belov'd of Pan,
Of Pan and the Nymphs?
That he sits, bending downward
His white, delicate neck
To the ivy-wreath'd marge
Of thy cup:—the bright, glancing vine-leaves
That crown his hair,
Falling forwards, mingling
With the dark ivy-plants;
His fawn-skin, half untied,
Smear'd with red wine-stains? Who is he,
That he sits, overweigh'd
By fumes of wine and sleep,
So late, in thy portico?
What youth, Goddess,—what guest
Of Gods or mortals?

CIRCE.

Hist! he wakes!
I lur'd him not hither, Ulysses.
Nay, ask him!

THE YOUTH.

Who speaks? Ah! Who comes forth
To thy side, Goddess, from within?
How shall I name him?
This spare, dark-featur'd,
Quick-ey'd stranger?
Ah! and I see too
His sailor's bonnet,
His short coat, travel-tarnish'd,
With one arm bare.—
Art thou not he, whom fame
This long time rumours
The favour'd guest of Circe, brought by the waves?
Art thou he, stranger?
The wise Ulysses,
Laertes' son?

ULYSSES.

I am Ulysses.
And thou, too, sleeper?
Thy voice is sweet.
It may be that thou hast follow'd
Through the islands some divine bard,

By age taught many things,
Age and the Muses
And heard him delighting
The chiefs and people
In the banquet, and learn'd his songs,
Of Gods and Heroes,
Of war and arts,
And peopled cities
Inland, or built
By the gray sea.—If so, then hail!
I honour and welcome thee.

THE YOUTH.

The Gods are happy.
They turn on all sides
Their shining eyes:
And see, below them,
The Earth, and men.

They see Tiresias
Sitting, staff in hand,
On the warm, grassy
Asopus' bank:
His robe drawn over
His old, sightless head:
Revolving inly
The doom of Thebes.

They see the Centaurs
In the upper glens

Of Pelion, in the streams,
Where red-berried ashes fringe
The clear-brown shallow pools;
With streaming flanks, and heads
Rear'd proudly, snuffing
The mountain wind.
They see the Indian
Drifting, knife in hand,
His frail boat moor'd to
A floating isle thick matted
With large leav'd, low-creeping melon-plants,
And the dark cucumber.
He reaps, and stows them,
Drifting—drifting:—round him,
Round his green harvest-plot,
Flow the cool lake-waves:
The mountains ring them.

They see the Scythian
On the wide Stepp, unharnessing
His wheel'd house at noon.
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal,
Mare's milk, and bread
Bak'd on the embers:—all around
The boundless waving grass-plains stretch, thick-starr'd
With saffron and the yellow hollyhock
And flag-leav'd iris flowers.
Sitting in his cart

He makes his meal: before him, for long
miles,
Alive with bright green lizards,
And the springing bustard fowl,
The track, a straight black line,
Furrows the rich soil: here and there
Clusters of lonely mounds
Topp'd with rough-hewn
Gray, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer
The sunny Waste.
They see the Ferry
On the broad, clay-laden
Lone Chorasmian stream: thereon
With snort and strain,
Two horses, strongly swimming, tow
The ferry boat, with woven ropes
To either bow
Firm-harness'd by the mane:—a chief,
With shout and shaken spear
Stands at the prow, and guides them: but
astern,
The cowering Merchants, in long robes,
Sit pale beside their wealth
Of silk-bales and of balsam-drops,
Of gold and ivory,
Of turquoise-earth and amethyst,
Jasper and chalcedony,
And milk-barr'd onyx stones.
The loaded boat swings groaning
In the yellow eddies.
The Gods behold them.

They see the Heroes
Sitting in the dark ship
On the foamless, long-heaving,
  Violet sea:
At sunset nearing
The Happy Islands.
These things, Ulysses,
The wise Bards also
Behold and sing.
But oh, what labour!
  O Prince, what pain!

  They too can see
Tiresias:—but the Gods,
Who give them vision,
Added this law:
That they should bear too
  His groping blindness,
  His dark foreboding,
  His scorn'd white hairs.
  Bear Hera's anger
  Through a life lengthen'd
  To seven ages.

  They see the Centaurs
  On Pelion:—then they feel,
  They too, the maddening wine
Swell their large veins to bursting: in wild
    pain
  They feel the biting spears
Of the grim Lapithæ, and Theseus, drive,

Drive crashing through their bones: they
feel
High on a jutting rock in the red stream
Alcmena's dreadful son
Ply his bow:—such a price
The Gods exact for song;
To become what we sing.

They see the Indian
On his mountain lake:—but squalls
Make their skiff reel, and worms
I' the unkind spring have gnaw'd
Their melon-harvest to the heart: They see
The Scythian:—but long frosts
Parch them in winter-time on the bare Stepp,
Till they too fade like grass: they crawl
Like shadows forth in spring.

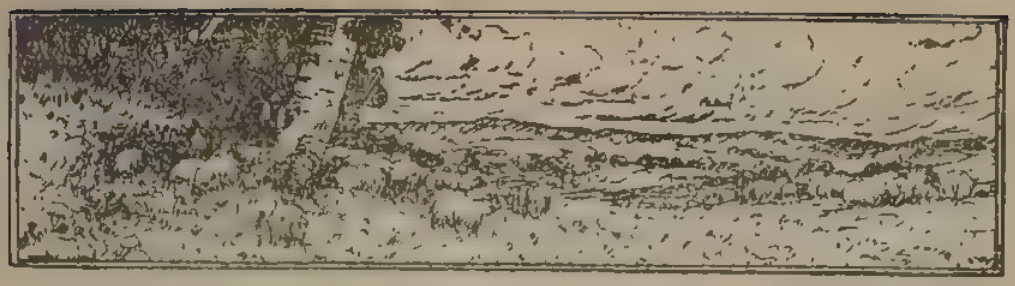
They see the Merchants
On the Oxus stream:—but care
Must visit first them too, and make them
pale.
Whether, through whirling sand,
A cloud of desert robber-horse has burst
Upon their caravan: or greedy kings,
In the wall'd cities the way passes through,
Crush'd them with tolls: or fever-airs,
On some great river's marge,
Mown them down, far from home.

They see the Heroes
Near harbour:—but they share
Their lives, and former violent toil, in
Thebes,
Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy:
Or where the echoing oars
Of Argo, first,
Startled the unknown Sea.

The old Silenus
Came, lolling in the sunshine,
From the dewy forest coverts,
This way, at noon.
Sitting by me, while his Fauns
Down at the water side
Srpinkled and smooth'd
His drooping garland,
He told me these things.
But I, Ulysses,
Sitting on the warm steps,
Looking over the valley,
All day long, have seen,
Without pain, without labour.
Sometimes a wild-hair'd Mænad;
Sometimes a Faun with torches;
And sometimes, for a moment,
Passing through the dark stems
Flowing-robed—the beloved,
The desired, the divine,
Beloved Iacchus.

Ah cool night-wind, tremulous stars!
Ah glimmering water—
Fitful earth-murmur—
Dreaming woods!
Ah golden-hair'd, strangely smiling Goddess,
And thou, proved much enduring,
Wave-toss'd Wanderer!
Who can stand still?
Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me.
The cup again!

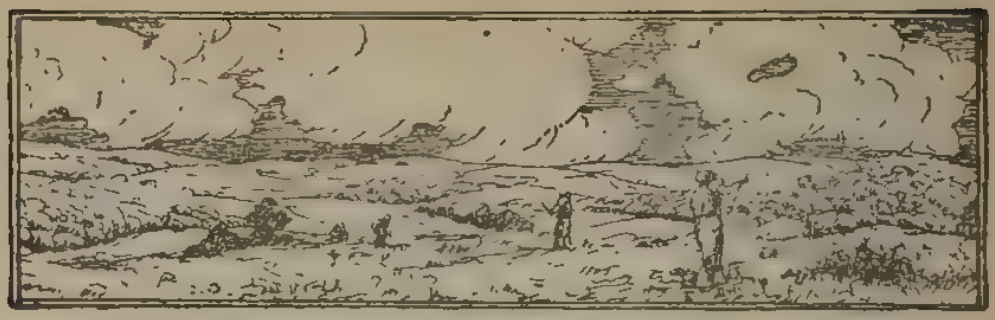
Faster, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul!



EARLY DEATH AND FAME

For him who must see many years,
I praise the life which slips away
Out of the light and mutely ; which avoids
Fame, and her less fair followers, envy, strife,
Stupid detraction, jealousy, cabal,
Insincere praises ; which descends
The quiet mossy track to age.

But, when immature death
Beckons too early the guest
From the half-tried banquet of life,
Young, in the bloom of his days ;
Leaves no leisure to press,
Slow and surely, the sweets
Of a tranquil life in the shade ;
Fuller for him be the hours !
Give him emotion, though pain !
Let him live, let him feel : *I have lived!*
Heap up his moments with life,
Triple his pulses with fame !



PHILOMELA

HARK! ah, the Nightingale!
The tawny-throated!
Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph! hark—what pain!

O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—
Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?

PHILOMELA

Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's
shame?
Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make
resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia—
How thick the bursts come crowding through
the leaves!
Again—thou hearest!
Eternal Passion!
Eternal Pain!

EXCUSE

I TOO have suffer'd: yet I know
She is not cold, though she seems so:
She is not cold, she is not light;
But our ignoble souls lack might.

She smiles and smiles, and will not sigh,
While we for hopeless passion die;
Yet she could love, those eyes declare,
Were but men nobler than they are.

Eagerly once her gracious ken
Was turn'd upon the sons of men.
But light the serious visage grew—
She look'd, and smiled, and saw them through.

Our petty souls, our strutting wits,
Our labour'd puny passion-fits—
Ah, may she scorn them still, till we
Scorn them as bitterly as she!

Yet oh, that Fate would let her see
One of some worthier race than we;

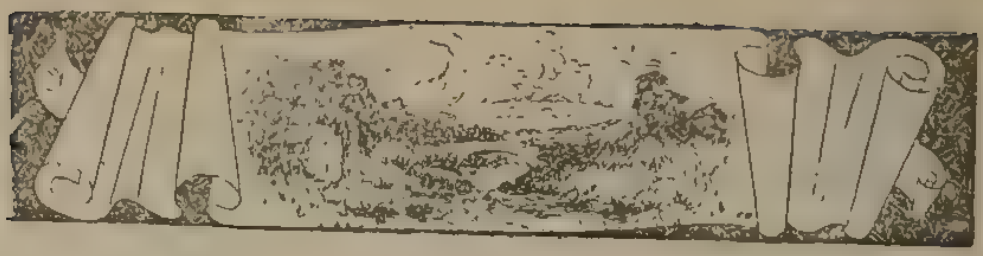
EXCUSE

One for whose sake she once might prove
How deeply she who scorns can love.

His eyes be like the starry lights—
His voice like sounds of summer nights—
In all his lovely mien let pierce
The magic of the universe.

And she to him will reach her hand,
And gazing in his eyes will stand,
And know her friend, and weep for glee,
And cry—*Long, long I've look'd for thee.*—

Then will she weep—with smiles, till then,
Coldly she mocks the sons of men.
Till then her lovely eyes maintain
Their gay, unwavering, deep disdain.



INDIFFERENCE

I MUST not say that thou wert true,
Yet let me say that thou wert fair.
And they that lovely face who view,
They will not ask if truth be there.

Truth—what is truth? Two bleeding hearts
Wounded by men, by Fortune tried,
Outwearied with their lonely parts,
Vow to beat henceforth side by side.

The world to them was stern and drear:
Their lot was but to weep and moan.
Ah, let them keep their faith sincere,
For neither could subsist alone!

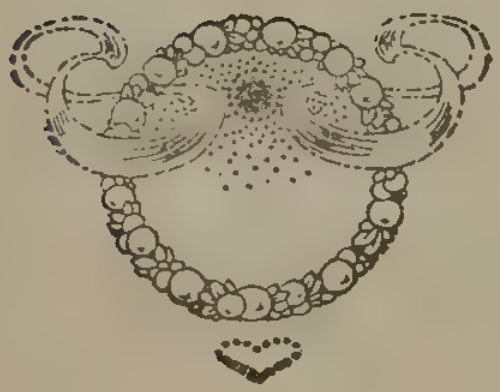
But souls whom some benignant breath
Has charm'd at birth from gloom and care,
These ask no love—these plight no faith,
For they are happy as they are.

The world to them may homage make,
And garlands for their forehead weave.
And what the world can give, they take:
But they bring more than they receive.

INDIFFERENCE

They smile upon the world : their ears
To one demand alone are coy.
They will not give us love and tears—
They bring us light, and warmth, and joy,

It was not love that heav'd thy breast,
Fair child ! it was the bliss within.
Adieu ! and say that one, at least,
Was just to what he did not win.



CALAIS SANDS

A THOUSAND knights have rein'd their steeds
To watch this line of sand-hills run,
Along the never-silent Strait,
To Calais glittering in the sun.

To look toward Andres' Golden Field
Across this wide aërial plain,
Which glows as if the Middle Age
Were gorgeous upon earth again.

Oh, that to share this famous scene
I saw, upon the open sand,
Thy lovely presence at my side,
Thy shawl, thy look, thy smile, thy hand!

How exquisite thy voice would come,
My darling, on this lonely air!
How sweetly would the fresh sea-breeze
Shake loose some lock of soft brown hair!

But now my glance but once hath roved
O'er Calais and its famous plain;

CALAIS SANDS

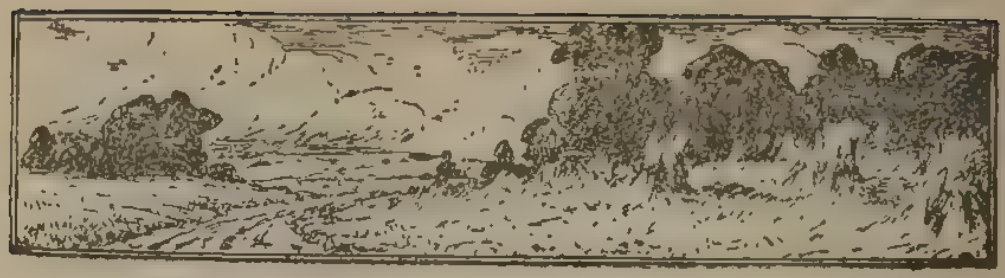
To England's cliffs my gaze is turn'd,
O'er the blue Strait mine eyes I strain.

Thou comest! Yes, the vessel's cloud
Hangs dark upon the rolling sea!—
Oh that yon seabird's wings were mine
To win one instant's glimpse of thee!

I must not spring to grasp thy hand,
To woo thy smile, to seek thine eye;
But I may stand far off, and gaze,
And watch thee pass unconscious by,

And spell thy looks, and guess thy thoughts,
Mixt with the idlers on the pier,—
Ah, might I always rest unseen,
So I might have thee always near!

To-morrow hurry through the fields
Of Flanders to the storied Rhine!
To-night those soft-fringed eyes shall close
Beneath one roof, my queen! with mine.



THE RIVER

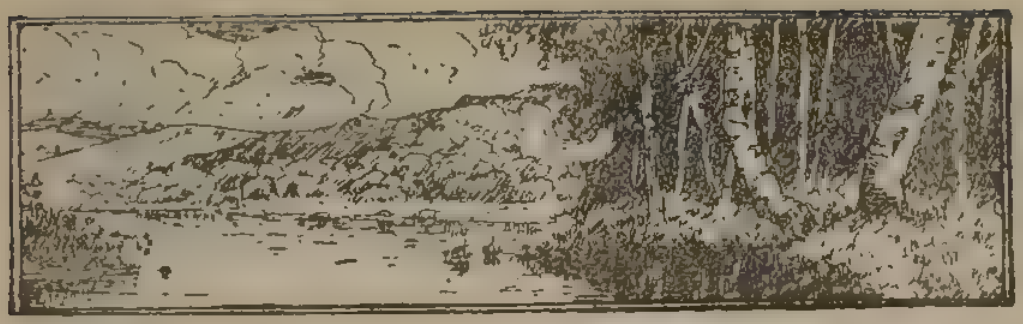
STILL glides the stream, slow drops the boat
Under the rustling poplars' shade;
Silent the swans beside us float—
None speaks, none heeds; ah, turn thy head!

Let those arch eyes now softly shine,
That mocking mouth grow sweetly bland;
Ah, let them rest, those eyes, on mine!
On mine let rest that lovely hand!

My pent-up tears oppress my brain,
My heart is swoln with love unsaid.
Ah, let me weep, and tell my pain,
And on thy shoulder rest my head!

Before I die—before the soul,
Which now is mine, must re-attain
Immunity from my controul,
And wander round the world again;

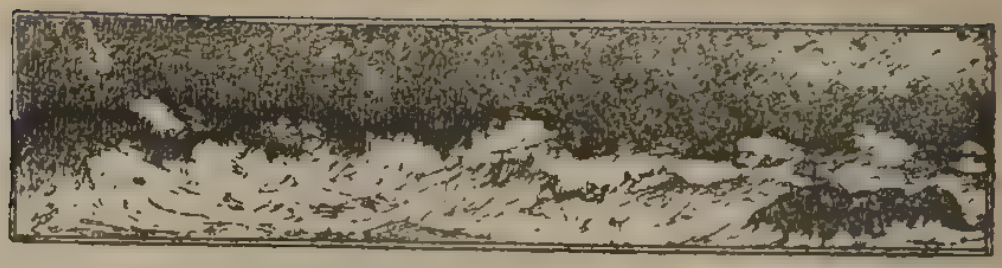
Before this teas'd o'erlabour'd heart
For ever leaves its vain employ,
Dead to its deep habitual smart,
And dead to hopes of future joy.



TOO LATE

EACH on his own strict line we move,
And some find death ere they find love;
So far apart their lives are thrown
From the twin soul which halves their own.

And sometimes, by still harder fate,
The lovers meet, but meet too late.
—Thy heart is mine!—*True, true! ah, true!*
—Then, love, thy hand!—*Ah no! adieu!*



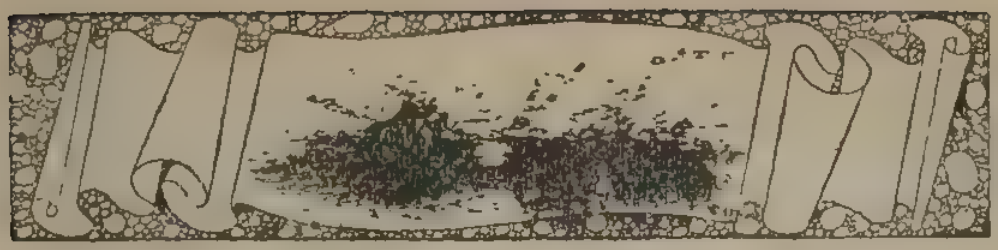
SEPARATION

STOP !—not to me, at this bitter departing,
Speak of the sure consolations of Time !
Fresh be the wound, still-renew'd be its smarting,
So but thy image endure in its prime.

But, if the steadfast commandment of Nature
Wills that remembrance should always decay—
If the lov'd form and the deep-cherish'd feature
Must, when unseen, from the soul fade away—

Me let no half-effac'd memories cumber
Fled, fled at once, be all vestige of thee !
Deep be the darkness and still be the slumber—
Dead be the Past and its phantoms to me !

Then, when we meet, and thy look strays towards me,
Scanning my face and the changes wrought there :
Who, let me say, *is this Stranger regards me,*
With the gray eyes, and the lovely brown hair?



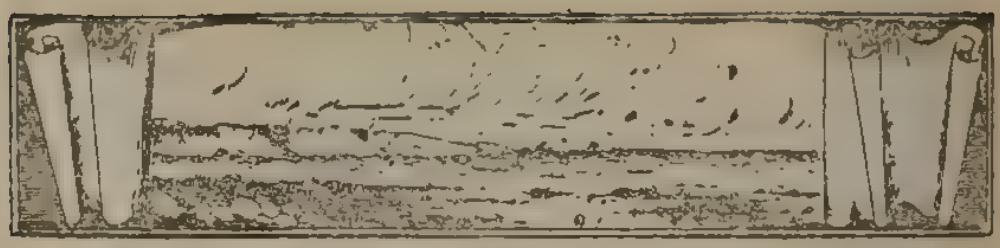
LONGING

COME to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again.
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times
A messenger from radiant climes,
And smile on thy new world, and be
As kind to others as to me.

Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,
Come now, and let me dream it truth.
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,
And say—*My love! why sufferest thou?*

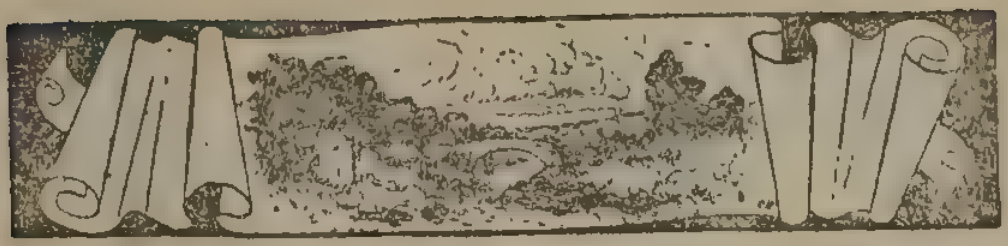
Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again.
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.



DESPONDENCY

THE thoughts that rain their steady glow
Like stars on life's cold sea,
Which others know, or say they know—
They never shone for me.

Thoughts light, like gleams, my spirit's sky,
But they will not remain;
They light me once, they hurry by,
And never come again.



DOVER BEACH

The sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the Straits ;—on the French coast, the light
Gleams, and is gone ; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air !
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the ebb meets the moon-blanch'd sand,
Listen ! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves suck back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

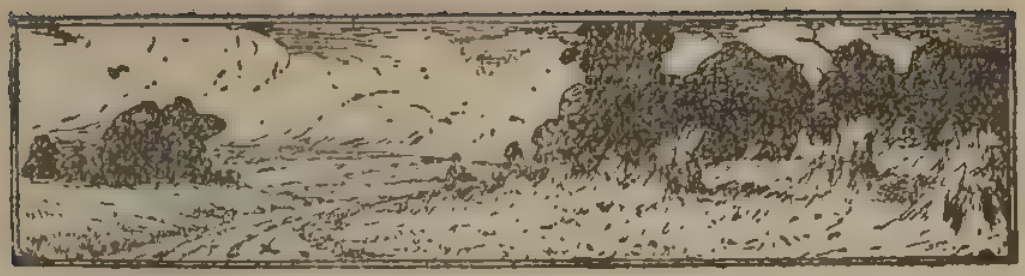
Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow

DOVER BEACH

Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's
shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and
flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.



SELF-DEPENDENCE

WEARY of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At the vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
"Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end.

"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye Stars, ye Waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew:
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you."

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer—
"Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without
them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

"And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll.
For alone they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

"Bounded by themselves, and unobservant
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see."

O air-born Voice! long since, severely clear
A cry like thine in my own heart I hear.
"Resolve to be thyself: and know, that he
Who finds himself, loses his misery."

LINES

WRITTEN IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

In this lone open glade I lie,
Screen'd by deep boughs on either hand;
And at its head, to stay the eye,
Those black-crown'd, red-boled pine-trees stand.

Birds here make song, each bird has his,
Across the girdling city's hum.
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless, active life is here!

LINES

What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world which roars hard by
Be others happy, if they can!
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,
Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world,
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new!
When I, who watch them, am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

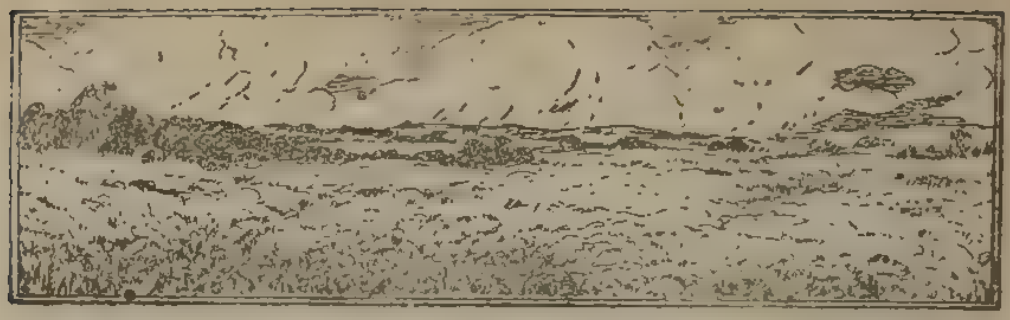
Then to their happy rest they pass;
The flowers close, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,

LINES

That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar!

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.



A WISH

I ASK not that my bed of death
From bands of greedy heirs be free;
For these besiege the latest breath
Of fortune's favour'd sons, not me.

I ask not each kind soul to keep
Tearless, when of my death he hears;
Let those who will, if any, weep!
There are worse plagues on earth than tears

I ask but that my death may find
The freedom to my life denied;
Ask but the folly of mankind,
Then, then at last, to quit my side.

Spare me the whispering, crowded room,
The friends who come, and gape, and go;
The ceremonious air of gloom—
All, which makes death a hideous show!

Nor bring, to see me cease to live,
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,

A WISH

To shake his sapient head, and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

Nor fetch, to take the accustom'd toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death,
His brother-doctor of the soul,
To canvass with official breath

The future and its viewless things—
That undiscover'd mystery
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he!

Bring none of these; but let me be,
While all around in silence lies,
Moved to the window near, and see
Once more, before my dying eyes,

Bathed in the sacred dews of morn
The wide aërial landscape spread—
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead.

Which never was the friend of *one*,
Nor promised love it could not give,
But lit for all its generous sun,
And lived itself, and made us live.

There let me gaze, till I become
In soul, with what I gaze on, wed!
To feel the universe my home;
To have before my mind—instead

A WISH

Of the sick-room, the mortal strife,
The turmoil for a little breath—
The pure eternal course of life,
Not human combatings with death.

Thus feeling, gazing, let me grow
Compos'd, refresh'd, ennobled, clear;
Then willing let my spirit go
To work or wait elsewhere or here!

THE FUTURE

A WANDERER is man from his birth.
He was born in a ship
On the breast of the River of Time.
Brimming with wonder and joy
He spreads out his arms to the light,
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts been.
Whether he wakes
Where the snowy mountainous pass
Echoing the screams of the eagles
Hems in its gorges the bed
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream:
Whether he first sees light
Where the river in gleaming rings
Sluggishly winds through the plain:
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea:—
As is the world on the banks
So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each as he glides
Fable and dream

Of the lands which the River of Time
Had left ere he woke on its breast,
Or shall reach when his eyes have been clos'd.
Only the tract where he sails
He wots of: only the thoughts,
Rais'd by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green Earth any more
As she was by the sources of Time?
Who imagines her fields as they lay
In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?
Who thinks as they thought,
The tribes who then roam'd on her breast,
Her vigorous primitive sons?

What girl
Now reads in her bosom as clear
As Rebekah read, when she sate
At eve by the palm-shaded well?
Who guards in her breast
As deep, as pellucid a spring
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

What Bard,
At the height of his vision, can deem
Of God, of the world, of the soul,
With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt,
When he lay in the night by his flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?
Can rise and obey
The beck of the Spirit like him?

THE FUTURE

This tract which the River of Time
Now flows through with us, is the Plain.
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.
Border'd by cities and hoarse
With a thousand cries is its stream.
And we on its breast, our minds
Are confus'd as the cries which we hear,
Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

And we say that repose has fled
For ever the course of the River of Time.
That cities will crowd to its edge
In a blacker incessanter line;
That the din will be more on its banks,
Denser the trade on its stream,
Flatter the plain where its flows,
Fiercer the sun overhead.
That never will those on its breast
See an ennobling sight,
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not,
And we know not what shall succeed.

Haply, the River of Time,
As it grows, as the towns on its marge
Fling their wavering lights
On a wider statelier stream—
May acquire, if not the calm
Of its early mountainous shore,
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush
Of the gray expanse where he floats,
Freshening its current and spotted with foam
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast:
As the pale Waste widens around him—
As the banks fade dimmer away—
As the stars come out, and the night-wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite Sea.

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

"There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while well exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned."—GLANVIL'S *Vanity of Dogmatising*, 1661.

GO, for they call you, Shepherd, from the hill;
Go, Shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes:
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,

Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their
throats,
Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another
head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to
rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes
seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-
blanch'd green;
Come, Shepherd, and again renew the
quest.

Here, where the reaper was at work of
late,
In this high field's dark corner, where he
leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen
cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the
sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his
stores to use;
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is
borne;
With distant cries of reapers in the
corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, Shepherd, will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep :
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade ;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers :

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again,
The story of that Oxford scholar poor
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at Preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the Gipsy lore,

And roam'd the world with that wild
brotherhood,
And came, as most men deem'd, to
little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends
no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars whom at college erst he
knew
Met him, and of his way of life enquir'd.
Whereat he answer'd, that the Gipsy crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they
desir'd
The workings of men's brains;
And they can bind them to what thoughts
they will:
"And I," he said, "the secret of their
art,
When fully learn'd, will to the world
impart:
But it needs happy moments for this
skill."

This said, he left them, and return'd no
more,
But rumours hung about the country-side
That the lost Scholar long was seen to
stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and
tongue-tied,

In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the Gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring:
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle bench, the smock-frock'd boors
Had found him seated at their entering.

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would fly:
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, Wanderer, on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer heats,
Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm green muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground.
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bablock-hithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the slow punt swings round:
And leaning backwards in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant woodland bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more.
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers — the frail-leaf'd, white anemone—
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eves—

And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none has words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
Have often pass'd thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown:
Mark'd thy outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air;
But, when they came from bathing, thou wert gone.

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,

Have known thee, watching, all an April day
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In Autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood,
Where most the Gipsies by the turf-edg'd way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of grey,
Above the forest ground call'd Thessaly—
The blackbird picking food
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,
And waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,

Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face towards Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climb'd the hill
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range,
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a Gipsy tribe:
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid;
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave

Tall grasses and white flowering nettles
wave—
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's
shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of
hours.
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their
being rolls:
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having us'd our nerves with bliss and
teen,
And tir'd upon a thousand schemes our
wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we
have been.

Thou hast not liv'd, why should'st thou perish,
so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one*
desire:
Else wert thou long since number'd
with the dead—
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy
fire.
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;

But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas, have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O Life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven: and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,

Whose vague resolves never have been
fulfill'd;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments
new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won
to-day—
Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it
too?

Yes, we await it, but it still delays,
And then we suffer; and amongst us One,
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and
signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was
fed,
And how the breast was sooth'd, and
how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest: and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would
end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to
bear

With close-lipp'd Patience for our only friend,
Sad Patience, too near neighbour to Despair:
But none has hope like thine.
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's appoach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,

By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—
Far on the forest skirts, where none pursue
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,
Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales.

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made:
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and
smiles!
As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægean isles:
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian
wine,
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd
in brine;
And knew the intruders on his ancient
home,

The young light-hearted Masters of the
waves;
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out
more sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the
gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the Western Straits, and unbent
sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through
sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded
bales.

MEMORIAL VERSES

APRIL, 1850

GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remain'd to come.
The last poetic voice is dumb.
What shall be said o'er Wordsworth's tomb?

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little: but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with Eternal Law.
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said—
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
Physician of the Iron Age
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.

He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear—
And struck his finger on the place
And said—*Thou ailest here, and here.*—
He look'd on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power;
His eye plung'd down the weltering strife,
The turmoil of expiring life;
He said—*The end is everywhere:*
Art still has truth, take refuge there.—
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale Ghosts! rejoice!
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we.
He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen—on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round:
He spoke, and loos'd our heart in tears.

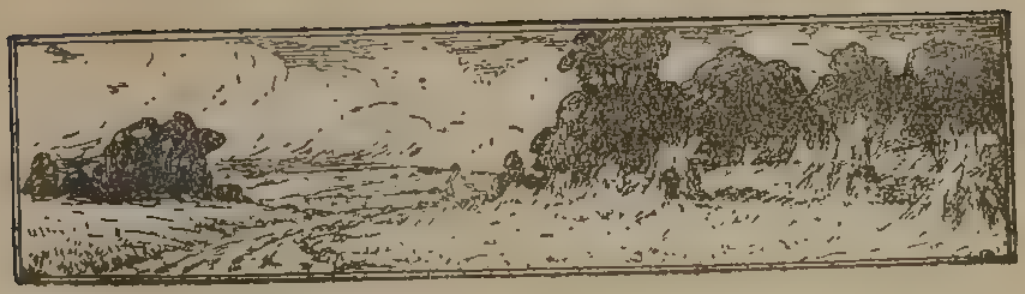
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear —
But who, ah! who, will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly—
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

A Southern Night.

'Twixt myrtle-hedges all in flower
By moonlight came.



A SOUTHERN NIGHT

THE sandy spits, the shorelock'd lakes
Melt into open, moonlit sea;
The soft Mediterranean breaks—
At my feet, free.

Dotting the fields of corn and vine,
Like ghosts, the huge, gnarl'd olives stand;
Behind, that lovely mountain-line;
While, by the strand,

Cette, with its glistening houses white,
Curves with the curving beach away,
To where the Light-house beacons bright,
Far in the Bay.

Ah! such a night, so soft, so lone,
So moonlit, saw me once of yore
Wander unquiet, and my own
Vext heart deplore.

But now that trouble is forgot:
Thy memory, thy pain, to-night,
My Brother! and thine early lot,
Possess me quite.

The murmur of this Midland deep
Is heard to-night around thy grave,

There, where Gibraltar's cannon'd steep
O'erfrowns the wave.

For there, with bodily anguish keen,
With Indian heats at last fordone,
With public toil and private teen,
Thou sank'st, alone.

Slow to a stop, at morning grey,
I see the smoke-crown'd Vessel come;
Slow round her paddles dies away
The seething foam.

A boat is lower'd from her side:
Ah, gently place him on the bench!
That spirit—if all have not yet died—
A breath might quench.

Is this the eye, the footstep fast,
The mien of youth we used to see?
Poor gallant boy! for such thou wast,
Still art, to me.

The limbs their wonted tasks refuse,
The eyes are glazed, thou canst not speak;
And whiter than thy white burnous
That wasted cheek.

Enough! The boat, with quiet shock,
Unto its haven coming nigh,

Touches, and on Gibraltar's rock
Lands thee, to die.

Ah me! Gibraltar's strand is far,
But farther yet across the brine
Thy dear wife's ashes buried are,
Remote from thine.

For there, where Morning's sacred fount
Its golden rain on earth confers,
The snowy Himalayan Mount
O'ershadows hers.

Strange irony of Fate, alas!
Which, for two jaded English, saves,
When from their dusty life they pass,
Such peaceful graves.

In cities should we English lie,
Where cries are rising ever new,
And men's incessant stream goes by;
We who pursue.

Our business with unslackening stride,
Traverse in troops, with care-fill'd breast,
The soft Mediterranean side,
The Nile, the East,

And see all sights from Pole to Pole,
And glance, and nod, and bustle by,
And never once possess our soul
Before we die.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

Not by those hoary Indian hills,
  Not by this gracious Midland sea
Whose floor to-night sweet moonshine fills,
    Should our graves be.

Some sage, to whom the world was dead,
  And men were specks, and life a play,
Who made the roots of trees his bed,
    And once a day

With staff and gourd his way did bend
  To villages and homes of man
For food to keep him till he end
    His mortal span

And the pure goal of Being reach,
  Grey-headed, wrinkled, clad in white,
Without companion, without speech,
    By day and night

Pondering God's mysteries untold,
  And tranquil as the glacier-snows—
He by those Indian mountains old
    Might well repose.

Some grey crusading knight austere,
  Who bore Saint Louis company,
And came home hurt to death, and here
    Landed to die ;

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

Some youthful troubadour, whose tongue
  Fill'd Europe once with his love-pain,
Who here outwearied sunk, and sung
    His dying strain ;

Some girl, who here, from castle-bower,
  With furtive step and cheek of flame,
'Twixt myrtle-hedges all in flower
    By moonlight came

To meet her pirate-lover's ship,
  And from the wave-kiss'd marble stair
Beckon'd him on, with quivering lip
    And unbound hair,

And lived some moons in happy trance,
  Then learnt his death and pined away—
Such by these Waters of romance
    'Twas meet to lay.

But *you*—a grave for Girl or sage,
    Romantic, solitary, still,
Oh, spent ones of a work-day age !
    Befits you ill.

So sang I ; but the midnight breeze,
  Down to the brimm'd moon-charmed main
Comes softly through the olive-trees,
    And checks my strain.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

I think of her, whose gentle tongue
  All plaint in her own cause controll'd :—
Of thee I think, my brother! young
    In heart, high-soul'd ;

That comely face, that cluster'd brow,
  That cordial hand, that bearing free—
I see them still, I see them now,
    Shall always see.

And what, but gentleness untired,
  And what, but noble feeling warm,
Wherever shewn, howe'er attired,
    Is grace, is charm?

What else is all these Waters are,
  What else is steep'd in lucid sheen,
What else is bright, what else is fair,
    What else serene?

Mild o'er her grave, ye mountains, shine!
  Gently by his, ye waters, glide!
To that in you which is divine
    They were allied.

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